

WILLIAM ELLIOT GRIFFIS:  
STANDING BETWEEN THE ORIENT AND THE OCCIDENT

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BY  
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To my family who sacrificed so that I might have.

To Dr. Yongkyu Park,

my mentor,

Professor of Korean Church History

at Chongshin Theological Seminary.

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## ABSTRACT

Korea remained inaccessible and isolated from the world for centuries, until 1882. That same year, William Elliot Griffis, an American orientalist, published *Corea: the Hermit Nation* and provided an encyclopedic introduction of Korea to the world. Despite the author's noble intention however, Korea was misrepresented, due to the author's lack of first-hand experience of the country. His knowledge of Korea was reliant on his missionary experience in Japan and the network of Japanese leaders he maintained since his visit. However, his Japanese contacts being a post Hideoyshi generation living in the Meiji Restoration period, the stories and documents he retrieved through them would likely have been products of altered history and of the Japanese war legends. Therefore, this thesis project will provide an analytical assessment of his book by examining the context of his view of Korea to help the modern historians gain academic discernment in their reference to *Corea, the Hermit Nation*.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE PROBLEM TO BE ADDRESSED

William Elliot Griffis is the author of the book, "*Corea: the Hermit Nation*", which became an influential piece soon after it was first published in 1882. He was once a missionary in Japan during the Meiji era, a Congregational minister, an orientalist, a lecturer and a prolific author. With his growing knowledge of Japan, he also grew sympathetic to Korea in the later part of his life. He noticed that this small country was forced to persevere through thousands of years of redundant attacks from the surrounding countries and felt the need to bring awareness of the country's existence to the Americans. So, he wrote the book with the purpose of making Korea known, specifically to the Americans and broadly to the Westerners. He gave lectures and wrote articles regarding his book to direct the Christian Americans to develop a Christian outlook toward the East. The purpose of his efforts of bringing awareness of Asia to the Americans was so that this Christian nation would become better agents of service to the needy East. This desire was accomplished in many ways. His book soon became a recognized reference in understanding Korea, read by people from various occupations including scholars, missionaries, government officials and ambassadors, naval officers, medical doctors and even his majesty in Korea. It provided foreknowledge of the land, its history, customs and culture as the travels grew in the West to Korea and to the surrounding countries.

It was through this book that the expression, the "hermit nation" was officially written down for the first time. Since then, the expression, "Hermit Nation" became Korea's permanent nickname and this expression was widely used even to this day when

referring to Korea. The term is often applied in the news media and other scholastic sectors as well. In 2008, the Voice of the Martyrs titled their North Korea edition, “*North Korea: Good News Reaches the Hermit Kingdom*”. In 2009, it was used by the United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in her reference to North Korea. There are many evidences affirming the residing influence of “*Corea: the Hermit Nation*”; the book’s influence has not ceased since 1882. Unfortunately however, despite the author’s noble intention, Korea is misrepresented and the misconceptions and historical inaccuracies are perpetrated through the pages of this book.

These problems exist because Griffis had no first-hand experience of Korea when he wrote the book. His knowledge of Korea was dependent on his missionary experience in Japan and the network of Japanese leaders he maintained ties with since his visit. However, his Japanese contacts being a post Hideoyshi generation living in the Meiji Restoration period, the stories and documents he retrieved through them would likely have been products of altered history and of the Japanese war legends. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to provide an analytical assessment of his book by examining the context of his view of Korea – to help the modern historians determine where to place this book within the spectrum of academic objectivity.

To begin the assessment of his book, it is necessary to understand William Elliot Griffis as a person. Therefore, in the next chapter, I will provide a brief biography of the author. Then, Chapter 3 will be dedicated to introducing Griffis’ network of people, which will help us to understand who and how Griffis was influenced. Both Chapters 2 and 3 will critically contribute to establishing the foundation for the following two chapters. After establishing the context of the make-up of William Elliot Griffis, I will

give examples of Griffis' misrepresentation of Korea and analyze the flaws throughout Chapter 4. Then in Chapter 5, I will explain the reason for the kind of flaws discussed in the previous chapter in reference to the context of Chapters 2 and 3. In this chapter, we will see that Griffis' Asiatic perception and his selection of unreliable reference sources became contributing factors to what caused Griffis to mislead, misinform and misrepresent in *Corea, the Hermit Nation*.



## CHAPTER 2

### BIOGRAPHY

This chapter is a biographical introduction on William E. Griffis: his family background and his childhood, his young adulthood, his involvements at school and the people he was associated with. My goal here however, is not to assess William E. Griffis' life but it is to assess his book, *Corea, the Hermit Nation*. Therefore I will not give a full biography on the writer but only introduce the segments that would become helpful for us to understand the context of his writing and where he drew his information from in the process of his compilation for the final product – precisely his book, *Corea, the Hermit Nation*.

#### ***Family and Birth***

William Elliot Griffis was born in Philadelphia, on September 17, 1843 into a family where he inherited curiosity to adventure and high network ability. His grandfather, John Griffis was a Devonshire seafarer, who came to America and established himself in Philadelphia's tea trade. His successful business acumen, his second marriage to his own patron's daughter in spite of the fact that he had a wife back in England and his friendship with Benjamin Franklin attests to his shrewd sociability. Similarly, William Elliot Griffis' father, John Limeburner Griffis (1804-1879) was not afraid of adventure and had traveled widely in Europe, Africa, the Philippines and China from 1816 to 1836 where he made number of significant acquaintances with the Navy. On April 11, 1837, he married Anna Maria Hess in Philadelphia. His father-in-law handed down to him a reputation as the respected operator of a coal business. John's coal

yard was next to the United States Navy Yard. He knew the Commanding Officer well enough to allow the Griffis boys to come in and out the shipyard as they wished. John, in his coal yard, had built a platform over his pile of coal where William was able to witness the launching of Commodore Perry's flagship, the *Susquehanna* on April 7, 1853. On that platform, William had his first encounter with Japan on June 9, 1860 as he witnessed the first Japanese Embassy to this country. As he continued to witness these men in the streets of Philadelphia, he even viewed them superior to Americans in some aspects: "From the first, I took the Japanese seriously. In many respects our equals, in others they seemed to be our superiors."<sup>1</sup> This perspective was first of what remained to contextualize his favorable attitude toward the Japanese for the following decades of his life.

From his mother, William Elliot Griffis inherited faith and an ability to teach. Anna Maria Hess was a pious woman of Swiss-German descent, who taught Sunday School. 20 years prior to William's decision to go into ministry, Anna had an opportunity to attend a commencement ceremony at Rutgers, where "she vowed that should one of her boys go into ministry, he would study at Rutgers."<sup>2</sup> By 1863, William decided to enter into ministry inspired by Rutgers' president, William Henry Campbell's sermon given at his church, Tomas D. Talmage's Second Reformed Dutch Church.

### ***Military Service and Education***

Shortly thereafter, he enlisted in the Union Army to serve in the Civil War for 90 days (June 1863 to August 28, 1863). Upon his return, he began his preparation for his

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<sup>1</sup> Edward R. Beauchamp, *An American Teacher in Early Meiji Japan* (Hawaii: The University Press of Hawaii, 1976), 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

enrollment at Rutgers University. In the spring of 1865, his visit to Rutgers' president's office during the Commencement Week ensured his acceptance. After his enrollment however, Griffis changed his field of study from theology to sciences. Such decision was not out of the ordinary for Griffis who was hereditarily inclined to new and adventurous things. His expansive involvements during his Rutgers years affirm the vigor of his curiosity.

He had an extremely busy extracurricular schedule during his undergraduate studies at Rutgers. He was a part of two fraternities, one of which he served as vice-president. He regularly committed himself to chapel services, Bible studies and teaching Sunday School. He was also an avid reader and an enthusiastic writer. He entered various contests for composition, science and oratory, accomplishing six academic prizes and co-founded the Philoclean Literary Society that published monthly college magazine, *The Targum*, with his friend, Robert C. Pruyn. Robert's father was a former American diplomatic minister to Japan and helped Griffis to expand his knowledge about Japan. Throughout these years, he published 19 articles in *The Targum* and in various newspapers. He also had participated in the first American intercollegiate football game in his senior year; during his senior year, he taught at Rutgers Grammar School (today Rutgers preparatory school), where he met some of the first Japanese students in this country. There, he availed himself in many ways; teaching additional subjects a part from the required Greek and Latin; additionally, he even tutored several students, including few Japanese students. These vibrant experiences and dispositions since childhood have established Griffis' introspective blueprint, which he built upon for the rest of his life.

## *Encountering Japan*

For over two centuries, Japan isolated itself from the world, except for their relationship with the Dutch. Then in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Japan had made a revolutionary decision to participate in the global industrial development. Their international engagement became even more active with the accession of the Meiji Emperor in 1867, reaching out to the European countries for cultural and technical exchange. The Japanese government invested in interior and exterior human resources. Internally, they invited thousands of specialized Westerners to work and teach in Japan. Externally, the Japanese government funded their youths to study abroad in America and Europe. Rutgers University in particular, had unique ties with Japan because of the college's connection with the Dutch Reformed Church, which allowed for Griffis' encounter with the Japanese students during his undergraduate studies.

When he was teaching at Rutgers Grammar School during his undergraduate studies, he met several Japanese students. In the preface to his most famous literary piece, *The Mikado's Empire*, he elaborates his fond encounter of the two Japanese students, oblivious to their militant motives at the time:

In the early summer of 1868, two Higo students, Ise and Numagawa, arrived in the United States. They were followed by retainers of the daimios of Satsuma and Echizen, and other feudal princes. I was surprised and delighted to find these earnest youth equals of American students in good-breeding, courtesy, and mental acumen. Some of them remained under my instruction two years, others for a shorter time.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> William E. Griffis, *The Mikado's Empire: A History of Japan from the Mythological Age to Meiji Era*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: ICG Muse, Inc., 2000), 8.

Reverend John Ferris, who was the Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Reformed Church in 1866, had learned that the two young men of prestige had come “to study navigation, to learn how to build ‘big ships’ and make ‘big guns’ to prevent European powers for taking possession of their country.”<sup>4</sup>

Griffis’ enthusiasm for the Japanese continued to guide him more prominently in the years subsequent to his undergraduate studies. A year after graduation, in September of 1870, the relationship that he had previously developed while teaching at the Rutgers Grammar School had earned his invitation to Japan until July of 1874:

I was invited by the Prince of Echizen, while Regent of the University, through the American superintendent, Rev. G. F. Verbeck, to go out to organize a scientific school on the American principle in Fukui, Echizen, and give instruction in the physical sciences.<sup>5</sup>

He was one of the first Americans to have lived in the interior of feudal Japan. When he arrived in Tokyo on December 29<sup>th</sup> 1870, Reverend Guido Verbeck was one of the missionaries who helped young Griffis to adjust to the new environment. Griffis had stayed with Verbeck in Tokyo for 6 weeks, before moving to the provincial Fukui (formerly called Echizen), which is 200 miles west of Tokyo. Tokyo at that time, was fairly contemporary and rather dangerous for foreigners. In fact, it was life threatening for foreigners to walk around the city of Tokyo without bodyguards; prone to being slashed by *ronins* (patriotic masterless *samurai*). After finalizing his contract with the Fukui government as the principal of Echizen College, he left Tokyo in obedient response to what he believed was a calling from God: serving as a Christian teacher to help the non-Christian country of Japan to develop into a better, modern, civilized world.

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<sup>4</sup> Edward R. Beauchamp, *An American Teacher in Early Meiji Japan*, 15.

<sup>5</sup> William E. Griffis, *The Mikado’s Empire*, 9.

Unlike Tokyo, Fukui represented a typical provincial city of its time. It was a city of 12,000 inhabitants with 2,849 homes. The Fukuians washed their dishes and clothes in the clear mountain water. For Griffis, Fukuian life seemed like a scene from the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup> His students “all were bare-headed, with the top-knot, cue and shaven midscalp, most of them with bare feet... with their murderous swords in their belts... nearly a thousand young samurai.”<sup>7</sup> In spite of the initial shock, to a man born in the “Golden Age” of Philadelphia (1830-1860), Griffis grew affectionate toward the brightness of the Fukuians. Edward Beauchamp, an Associate Professor of Education at the University of Hawaii, who had a long-standing interest in the role of American advisors in Asia, quotes Griffis’ heart of esteem for Fukui and its people: “I was proud and delighted that my lot was cast in Fukui, a city which in eminence and intellectual and moral progress was set, as it were, upon a hill.”<sup>8</sup> In just few months into his life in Fukui, Griffis’ observation of his students had elevated from “barbarians” to his “peers”:

As I walked, I wondered how long it would require to civilize such barbarians... A few months later, and I had won their confidence and love. I found they were quite able to instruct me in many things. I need fear to lose neither politeness nor sense of honor among these earnest youths. In pride and dignity of character, in diligence, courage, gentlemanly conduct, refinement and affection, truth and honesty, good morals, in so far as I knew or could see, they were my peers.<sup>9</sup>

When the Echizen authorities of Fukui hired Griffis, the contract was for him to teach Chemistry and natural sciences in addition to his duties as the principal of the Echizen College. However, Griffis demonstrated above and beyond what was asked

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<sup>6</sup> Edward R. Beauchamp, *An American Teacher in Early Meiji Japan*, 36. “In an article written a few days later, and subsequently published in *The Christian Intelligencer*, he rhetorically asked, “How could a nineteenth century New Yorker live in the twelfth century?””

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 49.

from him, making voluntary arrangements to teach German for a handful of medical students, holding evening study classes for History, Physiology, U.S. Constitution and the Bible. Griffis was characteristically diligent. In Fukui however, it seems that he had exhausted his time in order to distract himself from his loneliness, which ultimately made significant contribution to the educational advancement of Fukui. He wrote a chemistry textbook for the Japanese; he established Fukui's first chemistry laboratory; his lectures outside the school curriculum were opened for all, which invited a wide range of people including the local townsmen, scholars and principals from different provinces, two chief officers of the Prince and even the Prince himself made his seldom but participatory visitations. In one of many letters he wrote to his sister, Maggie, it showed that he kept a colloquial relationship with the Prince – keeping faithful to his godly calling of helping Japan to “appropriate the fruits of Christian civilization.”<sup>10</sup> He wrote, “I want the Prince to feel that I am more than a time-serving foreigner... I discuss my ideas for the welfare of Japan, and have every reason to believe they are deeply influenced. Various evidences that all I do for the people is appreciated and is leavening opinion, come to me in various ways.”<sup>11</sup> This portion of his letter indicates that Griffis was a great communicator – a beneficial feature that continues to serve him throughout his life as an influential orientalist at the dawn of the new world orders of America's manifest destiny.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>12</sup> Richard T. Hughes, *Myths America Lives By* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 66-123.

## CHAPTER 3

### NETWORK AT HOME AND ABROAD

Understanding his contacts at home and abroad will help administer the analysis of the context of his thought and the context of his resources. Therefore in this chapter, we will see who his contacts were in the States and from abroad and how these relationships might have influenced Griffis' Asiatic perspective. Also, these contacts will explain the kind of documents that were delivered to Griffis for his compilation of *Corea, the Hermi Nation*.

Griffis was a sociable and highly engaged person. It seems that many were attracted to his brightness, his engaging and committal characteristics. His congeniality won him a widely diverse range of connections, which became his crucial resource as an Orientalist. Examining his informants both at home and abroad is important because Griffis' perception of Korea would have been a collaborative product of what was told by his contacts and of his personal Asiatic comprehension based on his firsthand encounter with Japan. This will help us to understand the context of Griffis' perception of Korea, based on which, *Corea, the Hermit Nation* was written.

William Elliot Griffis had a vast range of network – from friendships built through his teaching experiences, Navy officers, government officials both at home and abroad, missionaries and even some diplomatic embassy members. We will examine how he developed these various contacts one at a time.



### *William E. Griffis as an American Teacher*

Griffis's teaching experiences both in the States and in Japan had served to develop Griffis' network of people. The tutoring sessions he offered in broad range of subjects during his Rutgers' years seem to have contributed to his near future. The friendships he developed as a tutor to the Japanese students had continued to serve Griffis by providing him with reasons to stay connected with Iwakura Tomomi, with the Kusakabe family and with Hatakeyama Yoshinari. According to Griffis, Iwakura Tomomi was one of "the most conspicuous politicians in Japan." His relationship with politician Iwakura Tomomi developed through tutoring his son at Rutgers. Kusakabe was also one of Griffis' students at Rutgers, who unfortunately died in New Brunswick, New Jersey, due to tuberculosis. So when Griffis arrived in Japan, he made sure to bring Kusakabe's Phi Beta Kappa key to his parents in Fukui. As for Hatakeyama Yoshinari, he was also one of Griffis' students at Rutgers, who returned to Japan without completing his degree at Rutgers to become an interpreter with the Iwakura Embassy, who served in the Ministries of Education, Home, and Foreign Affairs as the President of the Imperial University of Japan. Griffis' influence however was just the beginning as he left New Brunswick to teach in Japan.

Then in Japan, his teaching experience in Fukui and his brief occupation as a professor in Tokyo had both served as Griffis' channels that developed his network of informants who soon became critical for his books. His first teaching experience in Fukui had earned him a lifelong friendship with his devoted translator, Iwabuchi, who was a well-educated *ronin* [masterless samurai] samurai of secondary rank. As Griffis' personal interpreter, Iwabuchi naturally spent much time with Griffis, riding together

after school hours, spending weekends at the seashore and eating together. Soon, Iwabuchi became more than Griffis' tongue but had become an initial informant who laid Griffis' preliminary foundation of Japanese life and culture,<sup>13</sup> upon which Griffis had built his Asiatic perspective. When Griffis left Fukui in 1872 for a new teaching career in Tokyo, Iwabuchi followed behind as a teacher in Yokohama, located only about 27 miles south of Tokyo.

Other important figures Griffis met in Fukui that helped lay his preliminary understanding of Asia were a group of seven young students living with him by the end of October, 1871. In return for the privilege of having access to more education, they were to provide Griffis with information on various aspects of Japanese life, which he used in his future writings.<sup>14</sup> However, Griffis does not mention them in his books, perhaps due to these students' lack of social significance.

It seems that his relationship with the prominent figures have developed mainly in Tokyo. He had two main routes that led him to these men. One was through Reverend Verbeck, who introduced Griffis to the Japanese leaders and the other was through his teaching career at an institution called, Daigaku Nanko (Nanko University). Since the Meiji government encouraged the young minds to study in Tokyo, Griffis was able to

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<sup>13</sup> Edward R. Beauchamp, *An American Teacher in Early Meiji Japan*, 40-41. "Iwabuchi was not only Griffis' 'tongue' during his sojourn in Fukui, but was vital in explaining Japanese life and culture to him."

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 50. "Griffis took many of them into his home, and by the end of October, 1871, he had seven young students living with him. In that active house Griffis spent much time informally instructing them in the virtues of the American constitution and in the wisdom of the western world... In return for Griffis' attention to them, either as part of their school assignments or as goodwill gestures to their hose, these students provided Griffis with a great deal of firsthand information on Japanese life that eventually found its way into print in his articles and books. The Griffis Collection at Rutgers contain a several score of essays written by Griffis' young students. The numerous topics covered the students' native cities and towns, the geography of their provinces, games played by Japanese children, Japanese money, signs and theaters, burial customs, their first impressions of foreigners, etc."

meet some of Japan's brightest students through Daigaku Nanko. Many of them became scholars and prominent members of the government. One of them became a Foreign Minister twice and another became Japan's Prime Minister twice. The former is Komura Jutaro and the latter is Tokahashi Korekiyo.

Komura Jutaro studied law under Griffis and was sent by the government to further his studies at Harvard Law. His career that began as a judge in Japan soon placed him in a minor position within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. By 1896, he was transferred to Seoul and became the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs. Then as a result of his significant contribution in the events that followed the Boxer Rebellion, he became Foreign Minister in 1901 and once more in 1908.

Tokahashi Korekiyo was a student who used to read the native Japanese literature to Griffis. He later became the president of the Bank of Japan and served as the nation's Prime Minister for two terms. In the early 1930s, he had stabilized the yen as Finance Minister.

In addition to Komura Jutaro and Tokahashi Korekiyo, some of his other "leading students" and "progressive thinkers of the day" became founders of a literary society called Meirokusha, which its membership was extended to Griffis. The members of Meirokusha became his lasting group of informants. Griffis acknowledges this relationship in the preface of *The Mikado's Empire*:

I gratefully acknowledge the assistance derived from native scholars in Fukui and Tokio, especially Messrs. Iwabuchi, Takakashi and Ideura, my readers and helpers. To the members of the Mei Roku Sha, who have honored me with membership in their honorable body, I return my best thanks. This club of authors and reformers included such men as Fukuzawa, Arinori Mori, Nakamura

Masanawo, Kato Hiroyuki, Nishi Shiu, the Mitsukuri brothers, Shiuhei and Rinsho, Uchida Masawo, Hatakeyama Yoshinari, and others, all names of fame and honor, and earnest workers in the regeneration of their country. To my former students now in New York, who have kindly assisted me in proof-reading, and last and first of all to Mr. Tosui Imadate, my friend and constant companion during the last six years, I return my thanks and obligations.<sup>15</sup>

These names and ties are reconfirmed through Edward Beauchamp's research:

We also know that Griffis was a member of the so-called *Meirokeisha* ("Meiji Six Society"), "a literary society for the encouragement of western studies," which was composed of "the leading students of the West and the most progressive thinkers of the day." Among the original founders of this society were Mori Arinori, Fukuzawa Yukichi, Nishi Amane, Nishimura Shigeaki, Nakura Masano, Kato Hiroyuki, Tsuda Masamichi, and Mitsukuri Rinsho... Many of these scholars were also prominent members of the government at various times during the period. Griffis' participation in this context is important not only because it brought him into direct contact with some of the best minds of Meiji Japan and informed his voluminous writing about Japan, but also because it gave his ideas an entrée into influential Japanese minds... we can be assured his ideas moved in Japan's highest circles.<sup>16</sup>

Since these were the people group that "instruct[ed] [him] in many things"<sup>17</sup>, consequently the Asiatic perspective that first laid its foundation within Griffis was in line with the patriotic traditional Japanese presentation – debasement of other nations while exalting Japan, which will become more evident through the analysis in Chapter 5.

### ***William E. Griffis and the Navy***

Based on his father, John Limeburner Griffis' relationship with the Navy during and prior to his coal business, it seems plausible that William's relationship with the Navy had its natural start from early on in his life. Edward Beauchamp also seems to

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<sup>15</sup> William E. Griffis, *The Mikado's Empire*, 10-11.

<sup>16</sup> Edward R. Beauchamp, *An American Teacher in Early Meiji Japan*, 93.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

view this connection to have been a significant one for young William Griffis and mentions this portion of Griffis' life in his book:

Earlier in this chapter, Griffis referred to his attendance at the launching of Commodore Perry's flagship, the *Susquehanna*. His father, having "followed the sea from 1816 to 1836," had a number of acquaintances at the Navy Yard and indeed knew the Commanding Officer at the time who allowed the Griffis boys a great deal of freedom in the shipyard. As a result, young William saw the ship being constructed on his frequent visits.<sup>18</sup>

Then Beauchamp fast forwards 10 years in his following paragraph to the time when Griffis had encountered the Japanese for the first time, conveying the link between his childhood relationship with the Navy Yard, the Commanding Officer and the Commodore Perry to have been the motivating factor to Griffis' introductory curiosity to the land of wonders across the Pacific. Indeed, Beauchamp's indicator seems to have been correct, which will also be discussed further in Chapter 5.

His early encounters with the navy had been helpful in terms of Griffis' future development of his relationships with the Navy. He expresses his gratitude to the United States Navy in the preface to *Corea, the Hertmit Kingdom*, as he specifies few individuals by name for providing him with the resources that helped him to incorporate them in his book:

To Lieutenant Wadhams, of the united States Navy, for the use of charts and maps made by himself while in Corea in 1871, and for photographs of flags and other trophies, now at Annapolis, captured in the Han forts; to Fleet-Surgeon H. O. Mayo, and other officers of the United States Navy, for valuable information, I hereby express my grateful appreciation of kindness shown. I would that Admiral

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<sup>18</sup> Edward R. Beauchamp, *An American Teacher in Early Meiji Japan*, 11.

John Rodgers, Commodore H. C. Blake, and Minister F. F. Low were living to receive my thanks for their courtesies personally shown me...<sup>19</sup>

What is impressive is that his naval contacts were not limited to the United States Navy, but went as broad as the Japanese Navy:

To Lieutenant N. Y. Yanagi, of the Hydrographic Bureau, of the Japanese Navy, for a set of charts of the coast of Corea.<sup>20</sup>

Based on the chronology of his books, his contact with the Japanese Navy is likely to have been introduced through “Captain Matsumura Junzo, of the Japanese Navy”<sup>21</sup>, who provided resources for Griffis’ first book, *The Mikado’s Empire*. His already exhaustive Navy contacts only continue to grow even greater from this point forward, as his list of correspondents from the navy expands in the preface of the later editions of *Corea, the Hermit Nation*. Based on Ensign George W. Foulk’s correspondence with Griffis quoted in the preface to the second edition, the Navy may have provided Griffis with delivery services:

Mr. Foulk writes under dates of June, 1885: “In Corea, I used it [“Corea, the Hermit Nation,”] as a field book; but in the disturbances of December last, my house was looted by the mob, and all my effects carried off. The library of the palace was lost at the same time; so that I must infer the book you sent to His Majesty was also lost.”<sup>22</sup>

From Mr. Foulk’s correspondence above, it seems likely that Mr. Foulk had personally delivered Griffis’ book to the Korean king. Additionally, based on the exhaustive collection of artifacts from across the Pacific, housed in the Griffis Collection of Rutgers

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<sup>19</sup> William E. Griffis, *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1902), xvi.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, xvi-xvii.

<sup>21</sup> William E. Griffis, *The Mikado’s Empire*, 8.

<sup>22</sup> William E. Griffis, *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, xii.

University Library, it seems likely that his Navy contacts have provided Griffis with delivery privileges.

### ***William E. Griffis' Missionary Contacts***

Griffis' relationship with Reverend Guido Verbeck may have been one of most important relationships in William Griffis' life. He was the key figure in enabling much of Griffis' various encounters with the Japanese. It was through Reverend Verbeck that Griffis was able to meet his first two Japanese students and it was also through Verbeck that Griffis was able to teach in Japan and meet some of the most important figures of Japan.

Reverend Guido Verbeck was a Dutch-American missionary to Japan since 1859 and was among the four representatives of the Reformed Church in America. Education was his major ministry in Japan, mainly due to the country's repulsiveness to Christianity. So, when Echizen began to educate their people, they sought out for Verbeck's help. Verbeck responded in few ways, one of which was introducing the Japanese students to Rutgers University. When Griffis was working at the Rutgers Grammar School, the first two Japanese students he met were Ise and Numagawa, "of good faith and worthy of attention"<sup>23</sup> according to Reverend Verbeck's letter of reference.

Few years later, the *daimyo* (lord) of Echizen asks Reverend Verbeck for recommendation of a qualified teacher from America to establish a science school in Fukui. Verbeck's search after a person of distinguished academic record, who is religiously committed with a reasonable amount of teaching experience, was extended to

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<sup>23</sup> Edward R. Beauchamp, *An American Teacher in Early Meiji Japan*, 15.

Rutgers through Reverend John M. Ferris. This news to work abroad had reached Griffis while he was in the state of discontentment over his low salary at the Grammar School. Griffis soon accepts this offer and goes to Japan in the fall of 1870, placing his theological studies on hold – after completing his first year in Union Theological Seminary.

Upon his arrival, Griffis was immediately greeted by few other missionaries, Reverend and Mrs. James C. Ballagh and Reverend and Mrs. J. C. Hepburn, who became his lifelong friends. In the case of the Hepburns, Griffis specifically expresses his gratitude in *The Mikado's Empire*: “To them I owe much... Hepburn... I am also indebted.”<sup>24</sup> By the time Griffis had arrived, Reverend Guido Verbeck was a superintendent of the Imperial College, whom Griffis had submitted his credentials to. During the transition period, Griffis stayed at the Verbeck's residence while waiting for his contract with the Fukui authorities to be finalized. During this 6 weeks with Verbeck, Griffis gained “access to many of the most prominent Japanese leaders of the day whom he mined for materials for his writings.”<sup>25</sup> Among these men were the daimyo of Echizen, Matsudaira Shungaku, himself, who not only attended Griffis' lectures but he and Griffis used to meet outside of lectures to discuss Fukui's future concerns.

Less than 2 years after he had left Verbeck's residence for his employment in the province of Fukui, in January of 1872, Griffis returns to Verbeck's residence in Tokyo. As he did 2 years ago, upon Griffis' arrival, Verbeck takes Griffis around with him, intentionally expanding Griffis' contacts once again. One day in February, they

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<sup>24</sup> William Elliot Griffis, *The Mikado's Empire*, 8.

<sup>25</sup> Edward R. Beauchamp, *An American Teacher in Early Meiji Japan*, 29.



interviewed the chief minister of the newly created Ministry of Education, where Verbeck had most likely discussed the terms of Griffis' new contract. That same afternoon, they attended an official reception at the Emperor's palace with other foreign teachers in Japan. According to Edward Beauchamp, Reverend Verbeck's influence continued for Griffis' benefit; to the extent of Griffis coming to know "every one of the fifty-five men who made up the new Meiji government."

In later year, Griffis was to claim, "I know personally every one of the fifty-five men who made up the new [Meiji] government." This, indeed, may have been true since we know that through his connections with Dr. Verbeck and by virtue of his position in Tokyo, Griffis moved in the same social circle as the Japanese leaders... Griffis' participation in this context is important not only because it brought him into direct contact with some of the best minds of Meiji Japan and informed his voluminous writing about Japan, but also because it gave his ideas an entrée into influential Japanese minds... we can be assured his ideas moved in Japan's highest circles.<sup>26</sup>

As for his missionary contact from within Korea, he mentions some of the monumental names of the Korean Church history, such as Reverend James Gale, Reverend Homer B. Hulbert, Reverend Horace C. Underwood and Medical Doctor. H. N. Allen. Among them, it seems that he was especially close with the Appenzellers, since Reverend Henry G. Appenzeller's family had given his collections of letters, journals and other materials to Griffis after his accidental death in 1902. With the Appenzeller collection, Griffis published *A Modern Pioneer in Korea: The Life story of Henry G. Appenzeller* in 1912 as a commemorative piece. Unfortunately, these missionary contacts do not become Griffis' informants during the time he was writing the first edition of *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, which was between the years 1877-1880. The first missionary long-term landing in Korea was not until 1885, which is 3 years after the first

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 93.

publication of his book in 1882. These names however begin to appear in the preface sections from the second edition onward. It seems that these missionaries, who were initially informed about Korea through Griffis had later repaid their debt by becoming the informants for his supplementary chapters.

The Griffis Collection at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, contains extensive amount of correspondences he had exchanged with these missionaries during their ministry services in Korea in addition to the copies of magazines, leaflets, articles and mission reports from various mission boards and denominations. However, most of what Griffis had received from the missionaries in Korea could not have been Griffis' significant resource materials for *Corea, the Hermit Nation*. The dates of these documents show that they were printed in the 1900s, which was after the last supplementary chapter of 1897. For example, *Minutes of the Korea Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* was published 1916, the *PCUSA Annual Reports* dated 1909, *Ewha Haktang Annual Reports* (Currently known as Ewha Women's University) was dated 1918, *The Korea Mission Field* of 1916, *The Annual Report of the Christian Literature Society of Korea* of 1921, and copies of many others, most of which were published in the 1900s.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, his missionary contacts from Korea do not seem to have made such significant impact in Griffis' *Corea, the Hermit Nation*.

Among the missionary contacts, Griffis may well have considered Reverend John Ross as his Korea contact, since missionary John Ross was working closely with the

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<sup>27</sup> The William Elliot Griffis Collection, housed in the Rutgers University Library, contains an ample amount of materials pertaining to Dr. Griffis' works, from personal diaries, correspondences, notes, newspaper clippings, and etc. His Korean materials in particular includes books and articles on the removal of Queen Min, the Korean Independence movement, numerous resources in Korea under Japanese rule and many photographs and articles from the late Yi period. Hereafter this collection will be referred to as GCRUL.

Koreans during the time he was writing his first edition of the book. He was a Bible translator, who translated the Bible from Chinese to Korean, with the help of few Korean scholars. According to the United Presbyterian Missionary Record of October 1, 1880, there were at least 30 baptized Christians in Korea through the ministries of John Ross.<sup>28</sup> In the preface to the first edition there appears his tribute to “Ross’s “Corea” and “Corean Primer”.” As these books were also available at Rutgers University, I was able to take a look into the books, only to find out that they were learner’s guide to *Hangeul* (Korean alphabet) – unsuitable to help Griffis in compiling his encyclopedic piece like *Corea, the Hermit Nation*. Only one of missionary Ross’s books can be considered as a suitable resource material, which is *Corea, its History, Manners, and Customs*, published in 1879 and 1880.<sup>29</sup> In the bibliography section of *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, Griffis marks John Ross’s *Corea, its History, Mannners, and Customs* with a single asterisk, indicating that it was one of the sources he relied more heavily upon.<sup>30</sup>

However, missionary John Ross was stationed in China as he was also restrained by the isolation policy in Korea during his time. His access to the Koreans was limited to those he met in Manchuria, at the northern border of Korea. Although John Ross might have had more of a first-hand access to Korea in comparison to Griffis, he still lacked his entrance into the country. Therefore, missionary John Ross’s presentation of Korea would have been in the context of an outsider, inadequate to be considered as a resource

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<sup>28</sup> 박용규, 한국교회사 1: 1784-1910, (서울: 생명의 말씀사; 한국교회사연구소, 2004), 229.

Yongkyu Park, *History of the Korean Church Vol. 1: 1784-1910*, (Seoul, Korea: Lifebook; The Korea Institute of Church History, 2004), 299.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 300.

<sup>30</sup> William E. Griffis, *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, xix. “The following is a list of books and papers containing information about Corea. Those of primary value to which the compiler of this work is specially indebted are marked with an asterisk (\*); those to which slight obligation, if any, is acknowledge with a double asterisk; and those which he has not consulted, with a dagger.”

from within the peninsula. Evidently, Griffis did not have any resources that can be considered to be native Korean, when he first published *Corea, the Hermit Nation*.

## CHAPTER 4

### MISREPRESENTATION OF KOREA

Considering Korea had just ended their isolation policy in May, 1882, through the Treaty of Peace, Amity, Commerce and Navigation, Korea was left inaccessible for the world until Griffis' *Corea, the Hermit Nation* was published just in time that same year. By the time Griffis published *Corea, The Hermit Nation*, he had already earned his merit as a specialist in Asia as a result of his successful introduction of Japan through his previous bestseller, *The Mikado's Empire: A History of Japan*, published in 1876. Many have read *Corea, the Hermit Nation* since it was first published and has made its lasting influence, some of which are scholastically traceable.

Upon its first publication, many read the book purely out of interest in order to understand this newly opened country. In other instances many read it as a reference. According to the correspondences and the names Griffis mentions in the preface to his later editions, medical doctor, Horace N. Allen, Naval officers, Ensign George C. Foulk, Lieutenant J. G. Bernadou, General Lucius H. Foote have read his book in their process of preparing for their entry to Korea in 1883. George C. Foulk, in particular, writes to inform Griffis that he had used *Corea, the Hermit Nation* even as a field book:

Mr. Foulk writes under date of June, 1885: In Corea, "I used it [Corea, the Hermit Nation] as a field book; but in the disturbances of December last, my house was looted by the mob, and all my effects carried off. The library of the palace was lost at the same time; so that I must infer the book you sent to His Majesty was also lost."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> William E. Griffis, *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, xii.

In between the time the book was first published in 1882 to the arrival some of Korea's first protestant missionaries in April 5, 1885,<sup>32</sup> many missionaries have also used *Corea, the Hermit Nation* as their preparatory reference, before entering the country for long-term ministries.<sup>33</sup>

The book made its first publication in the same year as the end of Korea's isolation policy. The book became one of rare ways for the world to gain knowledge about Korea at the time. It provided a great introduction of the unknown country to the rest of the world. It was richly informative, filled with descriptions of their landscape, culture, social hierarchy, traditions, everyday practices, religion, diet, dress code, political orders, folktales, and history of Korea from ancient to the modern times – 1897. For this reason, it was used as one of the major encyclopedic references to Korea, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and has been referred to even into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

As helpful as the book has been however, there are critical flaws. Perceptual flaws contribute to the misrepresentation of Korea and informative errors contributing to contradictions and historical inaccuracies. Therefore in this chapter, I will introduce examples of Griffis' misrepresentation of Korea. I will draw from specific examples based on his presentation of the Korean dog, the first enthroned empress and the naval

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<sup>32</sup> 박용규, 한국교회사 1: 1784-1910, 372-391.

Yongkyu Park, *History of the Korean Church Vol. 1: 1784-1910*, 372-391.

“알렌 [Allen]은 9 월 20 일 제물포 항에 도착해... 서울에 입성했다... 1885 년 4 월 5 일 부활절 아침 아펜젤러, 한국을 시찰하기 위해 입국한 일본 장로교 선교회의 스쿠더 (Scudder) 박사, 테일러 (Taylor) 박사와 나란히 조선에 입국한 언더우드 [Underwood] 선교사는... 모든 면에서 끈기 있는 지도자 였다.”

<sup>33</sup> William E. Griffis, *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, preface page to the third edition. “The author returns hearty thanks to Ensign G. C. Foulk and Lieutenant J. G. Bernadou, United States Navy; General Lucius H. Foote, Mr. Pierre L. Jouy, Rev. Horace C. Underwood, Dr. H. N. Allen, Mr. W. G. Aston, Mr. Percival Lowell, Mr. W. R. Charles, Rev. Henry Loomis, Soh Kwang Pom, Yu Kil Jun, Pien Su, and the other naval officers, natives, travellers, missionaries, and residents in Corea who have aided him with their criticisms, or information.”

activities. In each of the three subject matters, first, I will present how Griffis misrepresents Korea through his misleading presentational layouts, followed by establishing the contradictions and historical inaccuracies pertaining to the topics. In this process, I will compare Griffis' account with the indigenous account. Then in Chapter 5, I will establish his misperceptions and his erroneous selection of references to explain the reason for his flaws in his book, based on what is established in this chapter.

### ***Examples of Griffis' Misrepresentations***

Griffis' presentation of Korea often misleads the perception of his inquirers. Significant portions throughout *Corea, the Hermit Nation* often serves as commentary to the Japanese subject matters. Also, in Griffis' effort to introduce Korea, he often has the tendency to portray Japan more favorably over Korea. In this section, I will give few examples from the book, where it serves primarily to aggrandize Japan, as it appears through his descriptions, through the layout of his presentation and through his dictions.

His chapter titled, "Japan and Corea", more noticeably serves to aggrandize Japan. In this chapter, instead of using his knowledge on Japan to become descriptive instruments to provide his readers a better understanding of Korea, he does exactly the opposite. As he introduces the significance of dogs in Japan and in Korea, he gives an extensive presentation of the Japanese *ama-inu* at the expense of his derogatory reference to the Korean *jindo*:

Dogs are not held in any honor in Japan, as they were anciently in Kokorai<sup>34</sup> ... Yet there are two places of honor in which the golden and

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<sup>34</sup> There were three major kingdoms that made up the ancient Korea: Koguryo (or Kokorai according to Griffis' Japanese pronunciation), Shinra and Baikjae (or Hiaksai according to Griffis' Japanese pronunciation) until 676 A.D. From 676 A.D. until 926 A.D. the three kingdoms were united under the

stone effigies of this animal – highly idealized indeed, but still inu – are enthroned.

The ama-inu, or heavenly dogs, in fanciful sculpture of stone or gilt wood, represent guardian dogs. They are found in pairs guarding the entrances to miya or temples... [They] were originally intended to serve as a model or copy of the palace of the Mikado and a reminder of the divinity of his person and throne, it is possible that the ama-inu imitated the golden Korean dogs which support and guard the throne of Japan... Those who have had audience of the Mikado in the imperial throne-room, as the writer had in January, 1873, have noticed at the foot of the throne, serving as legs or supports to the golden chair, on which His Majesty sits, two dogs sitting on their haunches, and upright on their forelegs. These... are called “Corean dogs.” For what reason placed there we know not. It may be in witness of the conquest of Shinra<sup>35</sup> by the empress Jingu, who called the king of Shinra “the dog of Japan,” or it may point to some forgotten symbolism in the past, or typify the vassalage of Korea – so long a fundamental dogma in Japanese politics. It is certainly strange to see this creature, so highly honored in Fuyu and dishonored among the vulgar in Japan, placed beneath the mikado’s throne.”

The Japanese laid claim to Korea from the second century until the 27<sup>th</sup> of February, 1876. On that day the mikado’s minister plenipotentiary signed the treaty, recognizing Cho-sen as an independent nation.<sup>36</sup>

Griffis presents the Corean dog merely as a utility to explain the significance of the Japanese ama-inu throughout this section. He upholds the Japanese ama-inu as the main subject through his literary structure.

However, there is an obscure contradiction in the reputation of the Japanese ama-inu. In one region, ama-inu is placed at the entrance of a temple to depict the symbolism of its divinity. But in another region, the same dog is used as a representation of disgrace. This is contrary to the consistency of how the Korean national dog, jindo is treated. In

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Shinra Kingdom. Then the Khitans defeated the Shinra kingdom and marked the beginning of the Koryo dynasty from year 926 to 1392. In 1392, the Koryo dynasty came to an end as Yi Song-gye becomes the rightful king and establishes the Choson, which lasted until the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> William E. Griffis, *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, 52.



Korea, there are folktales about jindo to depict its loyalty and bravery. The significance of the jindo breed, has even registered the breed as the 53<sup>rd</sup> national treasure.

Also Griffis glorifies the symbolism of ama-inu, over and against the Korean dog based on the Empress Jingu's reference to the king of Shinra as "the dog of Japan". This structure serves to facilitate his transition into his exhaustive presentation of the Japanese Empress Jingu, whose valor had easily obtained the vassalage of Korea:

The King of Shinra, accustomed to meet only with men from the rude tribes of Kiushiu, was surprised to see so well-appointed an army and so large a fleet from a land to the eastward. Struck with terror he resolved at once to submit. Tying his hands in token of submission and in presence of the queen Jingu, he declared himself the slave of Japan. Jingu caused her bow to be suspended over the gate of the palace of the king in sign of his submission. It is even said that she wrote on the gate "The King of Shinra is the dog of Japan."...

...The followers of Jingu evidently expected a rich booty, but after so peaceful a conquest the empress ordered that no looting should be allowed, and no spoil taken except the treasures constituting tributes. She restored the king to the throne as her vassal, and the tribute was then collected and laden on eighty boats with hostages for future annual tribute. The offerings comprised pictures, works of elegance and art, mirrors, jade, gold, silver, and silk fabrics.<sup>37</sup>

In like manner, Griffis's portrayal of the weak and cowardly Korean kings continue<sup>38</sup> throughout the chapter as he dedicates one third of this chapter to tell the conquest story of the legendary Empress Jingu.

Empress Jingu is believed to have lived a hundred years (169 A.D. – 269 A.D.), reigning over Japan from 201 A.D. to 269 A.D., as she conquered throughout ancient Korea. However, the validity of this figure has been historically controversial. According

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<sup>37</sup> William E. Griffis, *Corea the Hermit Nation*, 54-55.

<sup>38</sup> William E. Griffis, *Corea the Hermit Nation*, 55. "Preparations were now made to conquer Hiaksai [another one of the three Korean kingdoms as previously mentioned in Footnote number 37] also, when Jingu was surprised to receive the voluntary submission and offers of tributes of this country."

to the Chinese *Record of the Three Kingdoms*, not only was Japan dealing with internal unrest during that time for having an empty throne, but the throne was served in two terms, by two different empresses. The first empress enthroned to serve the first term at the time was Empress Himiko, whose reign lasted until about 247 A.D., followed by Empress Iyo. There was an effort to alleviate the problem of the overlapping dates during the Edo period (1603-1868) in Japan, by announcing that Empress Jingu and Empress Himiko had been one identical figure. This claim however, still failed to justify the duration of Empress Iyo's enthronement, which also overlaps with Empress Jingu. Due to these reasons, the validity of Empress Jingu has been historically controversial.

Additionally, Griffis' reference to Korea as a vassal country to Japan since the Shinra Kingdom era to the modern era in 1876 is consistent. From the beginning of the book and all throughout the book, Griffis introduces Korea as having been Japan's tributary country since the Shinra Kingdom (57 B.C. – 935 A.D.),<sup>39</sup> based on the envoy from Shinra in Japan.<sup>40</sup> Throughout the relationship between Korea and Japan, although not a tribute, there was indeed foreign trade between Korea and Japan. It was a common international practice in the East Asia to send envoys filled with goods from their own country to the other, as according to the Confucius tradition of give-and-take courtesy of *dab-lae* (답례 答禮). Woo-keun Han, a Korean historian, explains this international practice as foreign trade:

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<sup>39</sup> William E. Griffis, *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, 46.

<sup>40</sup> William E. Griffis, *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, 33. "Between the years 29 and 70 A. D., according to the Japanese histories, an envoy from Shinra arrived in Japan, and after an audience had of the Mikado, presented him with mirrors, swords, jade, and other works of skill and art."

Foreign trade was closely tied to official foreign relations. It was the custom whenever a diplomatic mission was sent abroad to send with it a quantity of gifts for the monarch being visited. He in his turn would send back gifts with the mission when it returned. Private individuals began sending along trade goods with these missions and this eventually became an officially accepted practice.

The bulk of foreign trade was with China, as there were frequent exchanges of embassies with the T'ang government. It was mostly in luxury items such as gold, silver and silk, Silla ginseng and Chinese tea. Silla monks studying in China also took a hand in it, though their imports were cultural rather than commercial, consisting mainly of books. There was also some trade with Japan, and Japanese imports far exceeded exports, one of the many indications of Japan's cultural debt to Korea.<sup>41</sup>

As Griffis introduces the *dab-lae* relationship as Korea's tributary offerings to Japan, it is an evidence of his insufficient knowledge of Asia, based on China and its history. However, having an Asiatic perspective based on the understanding of China is crucial to obtaining a proper view of Asia. This is because China was considered as a central agent to its surrounding countries throughout East Asia for many reasons. China had established a highly civilized government from early on, and had a powerful military. Geographically, China was the gateway for various cultures, religions, foreign goods, knowledge, and etc. to enter into the continent. Therefore, in order to have a correct understanding of Asia, it is crucial to have an Asiatic perspective with China placed as the head of all Asiatic influence.

For thousands of years, the Asian countries practiced a suzerain-vassal relationship under the suzerainty of China, which made the Chinese Emperor *Cheon-ja* (天子, son of Heaven to convey the meaning as the king of kings). As China held suzerainty over the East Asian countries, its surrounding kingdoms paid tribute to China.

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<sup>41</sup> Woo-keun Han, 1988. *The History of Korea*. Translated by Kyung-shik Lee. Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press. Originally published as 한국통사 (Korea: Eul-Yoo Publishing Co., Ltd., 1970), 96-97.

Therefore, under this suzerain-vassal relationship between Korea and China, Korea could not have been Japan's tributary country, since that would have been a violation against the *Cheon-ja*. But if Korea ever was Japan's tributary country, it could not have been since the Shinra Kingdom era, nor could it have lasted for as extensively as Griffis claims in *Corea, the Hermit Kingdom*, since China had held its seat of suzerainty for the most part of East Asian history.

Similarly, throughout Griffis' account of the Korean naval activities, not only does he portray the Japanese as Korea's superiors through the word choices and through the layout of his presentation, but he continues to mislead the readers:

One evil effect of their forced assistance given to the Mongols, was that the hatred of the Japanese and Coreans for each other was mutually intensified. After the Mongolian invasion begins that series of piratical raid on their coast and robbery of their vessels at sea, by Japanese adventurers, that made navigation beyond sight of land and shipbuilding among the Coreans almost a lost art.<sup>42</sup>

Here, Griffis refers to the Japanese pirates as "Japanese adventurers" and portrays them as intelligent navigators in opposing comparison to the weak naval technology of the Koreans. However, the Japanese pirates were not intelligent adventurers in reality. Instead they were unfortunate victims of Japan's feudalism, who were left with no other choice but to beg or steal in order to survive. In feudal Japan, most of the country was being controlled by the great daimyos (landlords), who were independent of the central government.<sup>43</sup> As the daimyos grew in power and ownership, a large portion of the population was stricken with poverty and turned to living as pirates.

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<sup>42</sup> William E. Griffis, *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, 74.

<sup>43</sup> Woo-keun Han, 1988. *The History of Korea*. Translated by Kyung-shik Lee. Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press. Originally published as 한국통사 (Korea: Eul-Yoo Publishing Co., Ltd., 1970), 219.

However, Griffis proceeds with his biased portrayal of the Japanese pirates, based on inaccurate information:

All this evil experience with the piratical Japanese of the middle ages has left its impress on the language of the Korean. From this period, perhaps even long before it, date those words of sinister omen of which we give but one or two examples which have the prefix *wai* (Japan) in them. A *wai-kol*, a huge, fierce man, of gigantic aspect, with a bad head, though perhaps with good heart, a kind of ogre, is a Japanese *kol* or creature.<sup>44</sup>

Here, Griffis introduces the Korean language, *wai-kol* and explains the meaning to elaborate “a huge, fierce man, of gigantic aspect, with a bad head, though perhaps with good heart.” However, the prefix *wai* used to refer to the Japanese character is 倭 (왜 pronounced “wai” in Korean), which means “foreign”. There is another *wai* under the Chinese character: 矮 (왜 also pronounced “wai” in Korean), which means “short”. And *Kol* (骨) simply means “bone”. Therefore, the Koreans used *wai* to address the petit Japanese<sup>45</sup> since *wai* serves to the wordplay of expressing “short figured foreigner”. Woo-keun Han’s reference to the Japanese pirates also corresponds to this definition, as he introduces the meaning in his book: “they were known by the contemptuous name of *Woegu*, dwarfs.”<sup>46</sup> This is another evidence of Griffis’ insufficient Chinese-Asiatic understanding. But more importantly, this is a demonstration of the detrimental effect of

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<sup>44</sup> William E. Griffis, *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, 75.

<sup>45</sup> The average male height of the Japanese was historically shorter than the average Korean males. While the average height of the Korean male was about 150 centimeters (4ft 11in), the average height of the Japanese male was about 140 centimeters (4ft 7in).

<sup>46</sup> Woo-keun Han, *The History of Korea*, 179.

information lost in translation, which Edward Beauchamp was also concerned about as a Griffis scholar.<sup>47</sup>

Then further down the section, Griffis informs his readers that Koreans had lived in fear of these pirates:

This chronic danger from Japanese pirates, which Korai and Cho-sen endured for a period nearly as extended as that of England from the Northmen, is one of the causes that have contributed to make the natives dread the sea as a path for enemies, and in Corea we see the strange anomaly of a people more than semi-civilized whose wretched boats scarcely go beyond tide-water.<sup>48</sup>

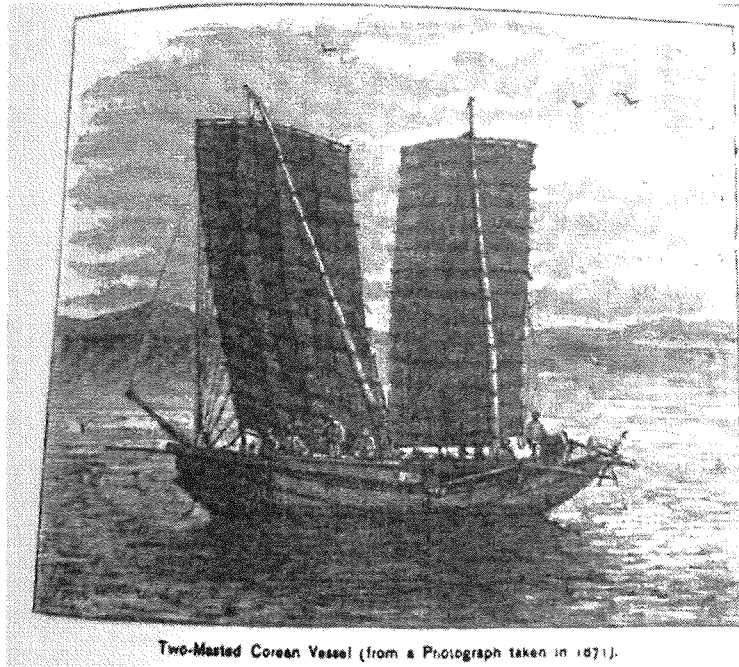
Based on the era indicated from above, Griffis portrays Koreans to have been in dreadful fear of the dangerous Japanese pirates for more than nine centuries, from year 918 to 1897. Notice the choices of expressions from above in service to providing demoted description of the Koreans as “semi-civilized” people “whose wretched boats scarcely go beyond tied-water.”

In this section, Griffis inserts a photograph of a Korean ship right on top of the above description to support his claim:

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<sup>47</sup> Edward R. Beauchamp, *An American Teacher in Early Meiji Japan*, 48. “Since Griffis’ knowledge of Japanese was never fluent, he required translation assistance for all but the most rudimentary communication with his students. One wonders how much was lost in the translation.”

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.



Two-Masted Korean Vessel (from a Photograph taken in 1871).

Figure 1

Griffis described figure 1 as a Korean vessel photographed in 1871. With this picture, he justifies both of his claims – “shipbuilding among the Koreans almost a lost art” and “wretched boats scarcely go beyond tied-water”. However, this is a misleading presentation about the Korean shipbuilding technology. Figure 1 seems to have been a small personal boat, based on the reality of the advanced technology of the Korean battleship prior to the Hideyoshi invasion. According to Woo-keun Han, the Korean shipbuilding technology has kept its consistency of advanced skill since the Shinra Kingdom era.<sup>49</sup>

By the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Korean battleship technology was far more advanced than the Japanese battleship. According to the 1942, Ripley’s Believe It Or Not article,

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<sup>49</sup> Woo-keun Han, *The History of Korea*, 114. “The art of shipbuilding was very advanced in Korea, so much so that Japanese travelling to China often made use of Silla [another way to spell Shinra] ships in preference to their own, and this gave the merchants a distinct advantage.”

General Yi Soon-shin had invented his Turtle Ship even before the first Hideyoshi invasion of 1592:



Figure 2

The Ripley's Believe It or Not article in figure 2 introduces the Korean Turtle Ship as the world's "first ironclad warship ever built", which "enabled Korea to inflict most disastrous defeat upon the Japanese" with the ability to "move backwards, forwards and sideways and submerged like a submarine – almost unaided it defeated the Japanese navy." This article is concurrent to the Korean historian, Woo-keun Han's display of the Turtle Ship:



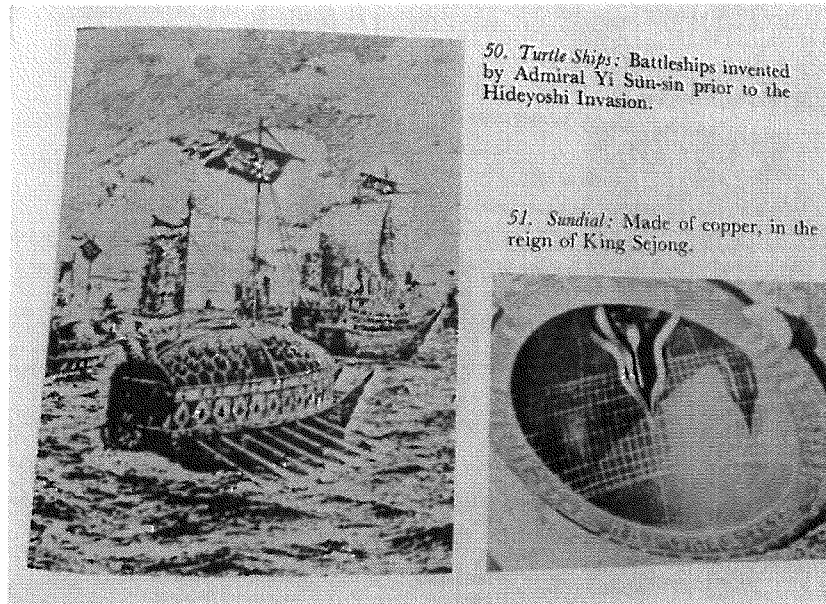


Figure 3

According to Woo-Keun Han, the Korean navy was able to cut off the Japanese supply lines with the invention of the Turtle Ship during both of Hideyoshi's invasions of 1592 and of 1597:

The Korean military forces, as we have seen, were weak at this time... Despite the Korean refusal of free passage, Hideyoshi did not give up his plan. In the Spring of 1592, having completed his preparations, he dispatched an army of 150,000 to invade Korea...

Meanwhile, Korean naval forces were having a rather more success than the army. Under the leadership of Admiral Yi Sun-sin, one of the great heroes of Korean history, they had developed the "turtle ship," probably the first iron-clad in history. This was a galley decked over with iron plates to protect the rowers and armed with a large iron ram in the shape of a turtle's head. These ships were pretty much impervious to any weapons the Japanese could muster, and so sank large numbers of troop and supply ships, seriously hampering Japanese operations in Korea... while the troops that had been sent to Hamgyong Province were compelled to return because Admiral Yi Sun-sin repeatedly cut their supply lines...

In 1597, when it had become clear that no agreement was possible, Hideyoshi launched a second invasion... The Japanese troops were unable to get beyond the southern provinces, while Yi Sun-sin, who had been reinstated... once more

harassed the Japanese shipping to great effect. On land the opposing armies remained deadlocked until the death of Hideyoshi sent them home for good.<sup>50</sup>

The detailed descriptions of the Turtle Ship documented in both, Ripley's *Believe It Or Not* and Woo-keun Han, show that Griffis' claims regarding the Korean shipbuilding were unwarranted statements.

In all three cases, Griffis uses presentational structures that would have been more appropriate for *The Mikado's Empire* than for *Corea, the Hermit Nation*. For the sake of this particular book, rather than setting the limelight on the Japanese subject matter, Griffis should have structured his presentation central to the Korean subject matters while making only brief references to the similar instances found in Japan. The analysis of Griffis' presentation of the three different topics all revealed Griffis' biased depictions in favor of Japan, his informative errors and his insufficient Asiatic knowledge. This could be explained by the fact that Griffis had first-hand experience in Japan but none in Korea. It would seem that he reverts to his knowledge of Japan, and to stylized Japanese accounts of interpretations with Koreans for their explanatory power. The analysis of the next section will reveal that his tendency to present downgraded portrayals of Korea was due to his perceptual flaws heavily influenced by his lopsided Asiatic encounter. In the process of establishing how his exhaustive Japanese encounter had influenced his Asiatic perception, his selection of resources at hand and the informants that provided him with these documents will show why Griffis lacked objectivity in his presentation.

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<sup>50</sup> Woo-keun Han, *The History of Korea*, 270-273.

## CHAPTER 5

### EXPLANATION OF HIS MISREPRESENTATIONS

The object of this chapter is to find out why the flaws exist in his book. The flaws in Griffis' Asiatic perception arise from the introspective aspect of the context of his thought. Therefore in this chapter, I will give an analysis of the context of his perspective based on his personal background introduced in Chapter 2 and also based on the people that partook in this influence, in reference to Chapter 3. Then, I will refer back to the examples of his flaws and provide what might have motivated the informative errors in light of the documents he drew out his sources from. This process will finally administer to providing an analytical assessment of the objectivity of his book as a whole, which will edify the readers' comprehension of *Corea: the Hermit Nation*.

The context of Griffis' perspective of Korea was a combination of the New World American Christian and Japanese Traditionalism. Griffis' general context of Asiatic thinking was the expansion of global Christian modernization. As an American Christian born in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (September 17, 1843), he was born to live the ideological era where Americans believed "they would usher in the second perfect age and thereby bless the world."<sup>51</sup> For the Americans living in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, America, the New World, would be the place of Christ's reign in his return – the second chosen nation to accomplish perfection for the second time since Eden. However, its duty was ours and it was Christ's to come and reign. Under such a myth of the Millennial Nation,

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<sup>51</sup> Richard T. Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 155.

America justified Westernization, promoting freedom, democracy and capitalism.<sup>52</sup> By the 1830s, Lyman Beecher, a Presbyterian minister in New Haven (1775-1863) taught that “the work of renovating the world was also the work of Christianizing the world.”<sup>53</sup> This explains Griffis’ self-consideration as a mobilizer to modernization of Asia sent by God – specifically to Japan – and the pity he often expressed when referring to the isolated Korea. He had a binary view – believing that isolation was always bad and opening Korea was always good:

As one diamond cuts another, why should not Cho-ka (Japan) open Cho-sen (Korea)?

...Corea cannot long remain a hermit nation. The near future will see her open to the world. Commerce and pure Christianity will enter to elevate her people, and the student of science, ethnology, and language will find a tempting field on which shall be solved many a yet obscure problem. The forbidden land of to-day is, in many striking points of comparison, the analogue of Old Japan. While the last of the hermit nations awaits some gallant Perry of the future, we may hope that the same brilliant path of progress on which the Sunrise Kingdom has entered, awaits the Land of Morning Calm.<sup>54</sup>

Notice Griffis’ positive correlation between capitalism and Christianity: “Commerce and pure Christianity will enter to elevate” Korea, epitome of the Christian American belief of his time. Griffis’ perspective of Korea was always in reference to Japan.

Beauchamp links Griffis’ childhood memory of the launching of the Commodore Perry to the time Griffis had encountered Japanese for the first time. Beauchamp’s recognition of the connection between the two was an accurate inference. For Griffis, his

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 155. “In addition, the myth of the Chosen Nation was still a vibrant, dynamic theme in American life and culture. As Lawrence Wright notes in his memoir, “America had a mission – we thought it was a divine mission – to spread freedom, and freedom meant democracy, and democracy meant capitalism, and all that meant the American way of life.” Would God choose America for such a mission if America lacked the qualities of goodness, virtue, and innocence?”

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 102-103.

<sup>54</sup> William E. Griffis, *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, xv & 10.

childhood memory of the Commodore Perry became the life-long needle point and Japan became its other leg that would mark the circumference of his future Asiatic understandings. Personally for Griffis, the history of Japan has its most significant second beginning at the “advent of Commodore Perry” as he opens his concluding chapter of *The Mikado’s Empire*:

The history of Japan, as manifested in the current of events since the advent of Commodore Perry, has its sources in a number of distinct movements, some logically connected, others totally distinct from the rest. These were intended to effect: 1. The overthrow of the shogun, and his reduction to his proper level as a vassal; 2. The restoration of the true emperor to supreme power; 3. The abolition of the feudal system and a return to the ancient imperial regime; 4. The abolition of Buddhism, and the establishment of pure Shinto as the national faith and the engine of government. These four movements were historically and logically connected. The fifth was the expulsion of the foreign “barbarians,” and the dictatorial isolation of Japan from the rest of the world; the sixth, the abandonment of this design, the adoption of Western civilization, and the entrance of Japan into the comity of nations...

There existed, long before the advent of Perry, definite conceptions of the objects to be accomplished... In due season the spring would have come that was to make the flood. The presence of Perry in the Bay of Yedo was like an untimely thaw, or a hot south-wind in February... Like houses built upon the sand, the shogunate and the feudal system were swept away.<sup>55</sup>

In Griffis’ perspective, the old indigenous Japan had come to an end and the new and better Christian civilization had entered Japan with the arrival of Commodore Perry. This was a common way of thinking for the American people living between the end of the Early National Period and the dawn of the Gilded Age of America. As it was for the majority, Griffis also believed that Westernization was a positive byproduct of growth in Christianity.

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<sup>55</sup> William E. Griffis, *The Mikado’s Empire*, 318-319.

While Christian modernization was his general context of thought towards Asia, Japan was his primary context of thought in viewing Korea. With Japan being his primary context of understanding, this interfered with giving an unbiased representation of Korea to the world through his book, *Corea, the Hermit Nation*. Unfortunately this was inevitable for Griffis, whose first encounter of the continent of Asia was through the Japanese – the Fukui Japanese to be precise, crucially attributing to Griffis’ Asiatic perspective.

The province of Fukui, was a conservative region. Griffis’ residence in particular, was built “immediately on the site of part of Shibata’s old castle.”<sup>56</sup> Upon Griffis’ arrival, an old temple keeping priest showed him the relics to tell the story behind “the rusty breastplate and other portions of Shibata’s armor, picked up after the fire.”<sup>57</sup> Shibata was the lord of Echizen who the Fukui people kept in memory as one who kept his honor onto death – killing his wife, his children, his female servants, his friends and himself – dying like brave Japanese, instead of being killed in the hand of his enemy, Hideyoshi. From the relics kept safe for nearly two centuries and from the stories told, it is evident that the people in this region particularly valued tradition and history of the province. This explains the daimyo of Fukui being one of the last ones in Japan to resign from his feudal lordship in 1871.

In the Japanese culture, being conservative does not necessarily mean idle complacency and rejection to change. Rather, the traditional Japanese have historically

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<sup>56</sup> William E. Griffis, *The Mikado’s Empire*, 258.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

been able to well adopt different history. In *The Mikado's Empire*, Griffis praises this trait:

The noblest trait in the character of a Japanese is his willingness to change for the better when he discovers his wrong or inferiority. This led the leaders to preach the faith they once destroyed, to destroy the faith they once preached.<sup>58</sup>

Denouncing what is bad for the sake of obtaining what is good is an admirable trait indeed, especially when it comes to the matter of salvation. However, the kind of change Japanese pursued had often been destructive – obliterating all traces of inferiority. This practice solidified in the Japanese culture perpetually more since General Hideyoshi (1585-1598).

This valiant fighter was a history maker – making history as he destroyed and conquered throughout the feudal Japan, invading Korea twice (1592 and 1597) with the hope of conquering China and even fabricating his own personal past. As a peasant by origin, Hideyoshi knew that he would never have the chance to become a shogun. Realizing the need to change pedigree, “He made out that his mother was the daughter of a *kuge* [公家, a royal family; an aristocrat],” since no one at court knew who his grandfather was.<sup>59</sup>

This type of practice explains the Japanese press “busy in issuing pamphlets advocating the abolition of feudalism”<sup>60</sup> and “a proclamation abolishing the custom of wearing two swords”<sup>61</sup> of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Abolishing the past as means to gain a

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 347.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 259-260.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 353.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 359. “...the Premier Sanjo, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March, 1876, issued a proclamation abolishing the custom of wearing two swords: “No individual will henceforth be permitted to wear a sword unless he be

better future on the basis of the present condition has been a part of the Japanese political practice for a long time. Since the Japanese willingness to change was intricately motivated by keeping a good reputation, upon realizing the power of the Western civilization, they were quick to renovate in every way – their education systems, their culture, their laws – even if it meant denouncing the historical accuracy.

For Japanese, historical accuracy was secondary to keeping up to their pride and honor. Under such order of values, it is coherent that the Japanese “culture is built upon folktales” – as Griffis had complained at one point of his career. For example, in Japanese effort to portray Hideyoshi’s heroism, one of the war-legends pertaining to this war hero is that the handful of coins that Hideyoshi threw in air had all landed heads side up, confirming his conquest of China.<sup>62</sup> The 21<sup>st</sup> century cynics will quickly question the odds. However, the accuracy of the odds was irrelevant to the purpose it served for the Japanese. In the Japanese cultural context, the tale served to portray Hideyoshi as a hero divinely approved to lead his troops. Through such exaggeration, the Japanese had culturally accomplished their virtue of honoring their ancestors.

In the Japanese cultural context, it was against the Japanese virtue to make evident the negative traits of their ancestors to their children. This effort to preserve and

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in court dress, a member of the military or naval forces or a police officer.” This measure, first advocated by Arinori Mori, in 1870, now became law throughout the land – even in Satsuma.”

<sup>62</sup> William E. Griffis, *The Mikado’s Nation*, 261-262. “On his way, some one suggested that scholars versed in Chinese should accompany the expedition. Hideyoshi laughed, and said, “This expedition will make the Chinese use our literature.” After worshipping at a shrine, he threw up a handful of one hundred “cash” in front of the shrine, and said, “If I am to conquer China, let the heads show it,” The Japanese copper and iron *zeni*, or *kas*, have Chinese characters representing the chronological period of coinage on one side, and waves representing their circulation as money on the reverse. The lettered side is “head,” the reverse is “tail.” All the coins which the taiko [title that referred to Hideyoshi] flung up came down heads. The soldiers were delighted with the omen. Maps of Korea were distributed among the commanders of the eight divisions, and the plan of the expedition and their co-operation explained.”



pass on a glorified past seems to be an ongoing practice even in the present day Japan. Sato Gomei, a professor at Naruto University who also served as a textbook Hearing Officer, suggests, “It is good to record the truth as we truthfully can, while recommending [for the Japanese scholars] to refrain from making a villain out of his ancestor...”<sup>63</sup> Due to such mindset there are many present day examples of altered or half-told history easily found in the Japanese textbooks. For example, the Japanese textbook description of the *Mimidzuka* (귀무덤: referred to as the Ear-tomb by the Koreans) found in two textbooks – *High School Japanese History* (高校 日本史) and in *Detailed Japanese History* (祥解 日本史) – introduces the *Mimidzuka* simply as a memorial tomb:

In the year 1597, Hideyoshi placed a tomb on the west side of the Hoko shrine (方廣寺) for the Chinese and Korean victims, with memorial services (供養) presented by the monks of the five mountains. Located in Hagashiyama, Kyoto city.<sup>64</sup>

In the description above, Hideyoshi depicted as a spiritual shogun, who paid his respect to the deceased foreign enemies. The textbook omits the detailed historical account of the monument. It seems that the details were intentionally omitted, in order to avoid the

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<sup>63</sup> 홍진희, 일본은 한국역사를 왜 비뚤로 가르칠까, (서울: 소나무, 1993), 16.

Jin-hee Hong, *Why Japan Teaches Altered Korean History*, (Seoul: Sonamu, 1993), 16.

“여기에 상당 기간 문부성 교과서 심의관을 지내고 현재 나루토 대학 교수로 있는 사토 고메이의 주장을 인용해 본다. “사실을 사실로 기록하는 것은 좋으나, 그를 위해 자신의 조상을 악인으로 만들지 않고 공평하게, 차별하지 않고, 타국과의 관계를 기록했으면 한다.” 교과서 검토의 현장에서 라는 자신의 저서에서 밝힌 사토 교수의 이러한 주장은 일본 사학자를 포함한 심의관들의 역사에 대한 한계를 명백히 보여주고 있다.”

<sup>64</sup> 高校 日本史, 實教出版, 137; 祥解 日本史, 三省堂, 127.

*High School Japanese History*, Minoru Professors Publication, 137; *Detailed Japanese History*, Senseido Co., Ltd., 127. “耳塚 1597 (慶長 2) 年, 秀吉は方廣寺の西側に塚をきずき,

明や朝鮮側の犠牲者の霊を五山の僧(イ僧)に供養させた。京都市東山区。”

malevolent presentation of their ancestor. The barrow that supports the pagoda was made with several thousands of ears of the Koreans that the Japanese carried back during the Hideyoshi invasion, hence known as the ear-tomb. Also, part of the reason Hideyoshi appointed the five monks to present memorial services was because he was trying to alleviate the nightmares that were haunting him and not solely for the sake of paying his spiritual homage to the dead out of respect.

According to Mamoru Iga's essay titled, "Japanese Suicide", the Japanese government censor their textbooks in order to "produce bureaucrats and their faithful followers." Consequently the textbook censorship created a "shocking ignorance of the recent past among the young Japanese... is [also] due... to the omitting of undesirable information by teachers. The excuse given for the omissions is that there is no time for them, since such information is not required for the entrance examinations [analogous to the American SATs]."<sup>65</sup> Additionally, Iga explains why the present day Japanese lack historical objectivity:

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<sup>65</sup> Antoon A. Leenaars, ed., *Suicidology: Essays in Honor of Edwin S. Shneidman* (New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc., 1993), 321. "... goal of Japanese education is to produce bureaucrats and their faithful followers. This aim is today indicated by *kanri kyoiku* (managed education) *seikatsu shido* (life guidance), and textbook censorship.

*Kanri kyoiku* is the strict control of students' behavior inside and outside school. Even matters that would seem very trivial to Americans – for example, the color of socks that students wear – are important in Japan, because Japanese leaders believe that every aspect of behavior indicates an individual's personality. Textbooks are aimed primarily at preparing students to become loyal conformers and/or to pass the entrance examination. Although severe entrance examinations are not unique to Japan, the emphasis on rote memorization at the expense of questioning and discussion seems to be. "The shocking ignorance of the recent past" among young Japanese, as mentioned earlier, is due, in part, to governmental censorship of textbooks and, in part, to the omitting of undesirable information by teachers (e.g., detailed information about World War II). The excuse given for the omissions is that there is no time for them, since such information is not required for entrance examinations.

The stress on rote memorization sacrifices the student's ability to relate learning to both a worldview and daily problems, and it encourages intuitive knowledge rather than rational analysis. Scientific attitudes are emphasized in the physical sciences but not as much in the social sciences because of the many taboos, including the emperor system, minority group relations, and others. Nonconforming

The ignorance of the recent past (e.g. World War II) is to be expected from Japanese thinking, which is characterized by a lack of historical objectivity. Japanese history is the one that is written from their present-time point of view (Yamamoto 1987). In the Japanese mind, there is no historical fact, as separated from the perceiving mind. Japanese phenomenism accepts “nothing but the concrete demonstration which can be seen by eyes and taken in hand” (Nakamura 1964).

The lack of historical objectivity is the other side of situational realism, with which Ruth Benedict (1946) characterized Japanese thinking. Situational realism is the tendency to regard the situation in which a person is placed as the only reality; accordingly, preceding situations in which he was involved in the past (i.e., “historical facts” to Westerners) are no longer real or factual. To them, history is not a series of facts against which the present is examined. Past events are interpreted by the present necessity. If the past is in conflict with the present convenience, the past must be changed. Such a view of the past appears to contradict traditionalism. Traditionalism, however, means that the worship of tradition is an attribute of the ego, which examines past incidents and changes them according to what the ego considers to be the most favorable past.<sup>66</sup>

According to the Japanese scholars mentioned in Iga’s essay above, many Japanese are ignorant of the recent past and lack historical objectivity because the Japanese culture is haunted by situational realism under their tradition of serving the ego. Under such notion, they tolerate reversed interpretation of the past as a culture – making the past primarily relative to the present necessities at the expense of historical accuracy and objectivity. Iga also points out that such practice does not contradict the Japanese traditionalism; rather it is in line with their tradition. This is also coherent to a Korean scholar, Hong Jin-hee’s statement on what she refers to as, “the immoral practice of the conservative Japanese historiography”:

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students are punished physically or otherwise by their peers (called *ijime*) and by teachers. Sometimes physical punishment results in suicide, murder, or mental disorders.”

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 309.

Recent state of behaviors of documenting misleading history only exposes the immoral practice of the conservative Japanese historiography that disregards the transcription of honest history. - (Translation of the original text below)

오해할 소지를 남겨둔 채 역사를 기술하고 있는 작금의 행태는, 정직한 역사 기술을 외면한 일본 보수 사학의 부도덕성을 드러내는 데 불과하다.<sup>67</sup>

Considering how conservative and traditional Fukui was at the time of Griffis' residence during the 1870s, the above approach to history would have more feasibly been the case in Fukui than it is in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Japan. In addition to the atmosphere of the province itself, we must also bear in mind the people that surrounded Griffis during his employment. They were sword-wearing samurais by regional origin, feudal royalties and people in higher political positions. His description of his Fukuian students was that they were people "in pride and dignity of character."<sup>68</sup> Among these traditional people of high self-pride was his invaluable<sup>69</sup> translator, Iwabuchi, who was "a *ronin* samurai of secondary rank and rather well educated."<sup>70</sup> As it was mentioned in Chapter 2, *ronins* were fierce and "antiforeign"<sup>71</sup> patriots during the 1870s. According to Edward Beauchamp, Iwabuchi "was not only Griffis' "tongue" during his sojourn in Fukui, but was vital in explaining Japanese life and culture to him."<sup>72</sup> Additionally, as Iwabuchi's relationship continued even after Griffis left Fukui, Iwabuchi became Griffis' long-term informant to his books.

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<sup>67</sup> 홍진희, 일본은 한국 역사를 왜 비뚤로 가르칠까, 31.

Jin-hee Hong, *Why Japan Teaches Altered Korean History*, 31.

<sup>68</sup> Edward R. Beauchamp, *An American Teacher in Early Meiji Japan*, 49.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 40. "Griffis was quick to admit that "Iwabuchi was invaluable to me." Their relationship blossomed into friendship and they spent a great deal of time with one another."

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 41.

In addition to the Fukuian influence, Griffis mentions many others that helped him to gain knowledge about Korea. However, from the list of names Griffis mentions in his preface to *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, it is evident that he lacked any Korean contact at the time of his first publication of the book:

Many friends have assisted me with correspondence, advice, or help in translation, among whom I must first thank my former students, Hasegawa, Hiraii, Haraguchi, Matsui, and Imadatte, and my new Japanese friends, Ohgimi and Kimura, while others, alas I will never in this world see my record of acknowledgement – K. Yaye and Egi Takato – whose interest was manifested not only in discussion of mooted points, but by search among the book-shops in Kioto and Tokio, which put much valuable standard matter in my hands. I also thank Mr. Charles Lanman, Secretary of the Legation of Japan in Washington, for four ferrotypes taken in Seoul in 1878 by members of the Japanese embassy; Mr. D. R. Clark, of the United States Transit of Venus Survey, for four photographs of the Korean villages in Russian Manchuria; Mr. R. Ideura, of Tokio for a set of photographs of Kang-wa and vicinity, taken in 1876, and Mr. Ozawa Nankoku, for sketches of Korean articles in Japanese museums... To Lieutenant N. Y. Yanagi, of the Hydrographic Bureau, of the Japanese Navy, for a set of charts of the coast of Corea;... in Peking, Jugoi Arinori Mori; in Tokio, Dr. D. McCartee...<sup>73</sup>

Mr. R. Ideura and Arinori Mori in particular, are names also mentioned in the preface to his previous bestseller, *The Mikado's Empire*.<sup>74</sup> In *The Mikado's Empire*, Griffis introduces Mr. R. Ideura as one of his readers and helpers. As for Arinori Mori, it was established in Chapter 2 that he was among the original founders of *Meirokeisha* (Meiji Six Society); a leading student and a reformer; many of whom “were also prominent members of the government”<sup>75</sup> according to Beauchamp. As it was already established in our analysis of his networks, Griffis had more prominent Japanese contacts than those he listed in preface above. In light of the context of what was considered as traditional

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<sup>73</sup> William E. Griffis, *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, xvi-xvii.

<sup>74</sup> William E. Griffis, *The Mikado's Empire*, 10.

<sup>75</sup> Edward R. Beauchamp, *An American Teacher in Early Meiji Japan*, 93.

historiography in Japan, the historical account of Korea informed by the Japanese leadership is more likely to have contributed in favor of the country they represent over and against the interest of Korea.

As a result, when Griffis began to write *Corea, the Hermit Nation* in 1877, he wrote the book while his Asiatic perspective was still significantly under the Fukui-Japanese contextual influence. Consequently, his biased delivery is inevitable throughout the book, as we have encountered through few examples in Chapter 4. Such misrepresentations are due to Griffis having a reversed Asiatic perception, which was a predictable byproduct of his excessive exposures to Japan.

The revered-influence – Japan influencing Korea – became more prevalent with the founding of North America, as their rout entry to Asia was through the Pacific. However, for thousands of years preceding the modern era, Korea was the geographical gateway for Japan, as China was for Korea: “Corea received her culture from China, and gave it freely to Japan.”<sup>76</sup> Korea has long been a historical benefactor to the Japanese. Therefore, to develop a reversed historical comprehension would either complicate one’s understanding or minimize the historicity, which was unfortunately the case for Griffis. Griffis was well aware that Japan had been the cultural recipient:

“...so for centuries there crossed the sea from the peninsula a stream of scholars, artists, and missionaries who brought to Japan the social culture of Chosen, the literature of China, and the religion of India. A grateful bonze of Japan has well told the story of Corea’s part in the civilization of his native country in a book entitled “Precious Jewels from a Neighbor Country.”... and Japan, once the pupil... has in these last days become the helpful friend of Corea’s people.”<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> William E. Griffis, *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, 337.

<sup>77</sup> William E. Griffis, *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, 9-10.

Nevertheless, instead of making the effort to understand Japan in light of Korea, he continues to base his understanding of Korea in reversed direction. This is as irregular as trying to learn about England based on the American historical context, which its short comings would soon be inevitable. However, since *Corea, the Hermit Nation* was first published in the same year as Korea's official ban of the isolation policy (1882), it is likely that Griffis lacked access to contacts in Korea to provide him with original documents and first hand reports of the land from within. As a result, his preface and bibliography reveals that he relied heavily on the Japanese contacts and resources rather than on Korean ones, despite his claim to have been objective as possible:

I have sought information from sources from within and without Corea, in maps and charts, coins and pottery, the language and art, notes and narratives of eye-witnesses, pencil-sketches, paintings and photographs, the standard histories of Japan and China, the testimony of sailor and diplomatist, missionary and castaway, and the digested knowledge of critical scholars. I have attempted nothing more than a historical outline of the nation and a glimpse at the political and social life of the people...

The bulk of the text was written between the years 1877 and 1880; since which time the literature of the subject has been enriched by Ross's "Corea" and "Corean Primer,"<sup>78</sup>

The closest person to be considered his Korean contact would have been missionary John Ross. However, as it was established earlier in Chapter 2, John Ross was under qualified to be considered as an objective informant from within Korea.

As for the eye-witness accounts, based on the bibliography, Griffis had relied on his Japanese contacts, Japanese newspaper articles about Korea and naval reports. About a quarter of the references marked with a single asterisk are naval reports. The dates

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<sup>78</sup> William E. Griffis, *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, xv-xvi.

indicating these naval voyages documented reveal that their voyages took place in the mid-1800s, most of them in the year 1866. However, 1866 was the pinnacle year of Korea's isolation policy, having set on fire, the U.S. General Sherman and executing all of its crew in violation of Korea's isolation policy. Among the people on board was Robert J. Thomas, who marks the first Protestant martyrdom in Korea. Considering it was one of most dangerous times for foreigners to survey Korea, the eye-witness accounts would have been limited to providing Griffis with external descriptions of the country, such as its sea currents, weather, geographical descriptions, appearance of the people and their dress codes. This explains Griffis' beautiful description of the topography of Korea, the geography, weather, seasonal variations and even his ability to provide specified location by longitude and latitude without having visited the land himself. Another insider's eye-witnessed account of Korea Griffis referred to was a testimony of a 17<sup>th</sup> century imprisoned voyager. However, it is hard to imagine this document giving an objective account of Korea, considering the maltreatment he would have received as a foreign prisoner in the 1600s.

Another important factor his bibliography reveals is that the sources Griffis was dependent upon were Japanese account of the Korean history in light of the Hidoyeshi invasion. The following are some of the list of books and its respective descriptions, as it appears in the bibliography of *Corea, the Hermit Nation*:

\* History of the Eastern Barbarians. "Book cxv. contains a sketch of the tribes and nations occupying the northeastern seaboard of China, with the territory now known as Manchuria and Corea."...which also furnishes the basis of Japanese accounts of Korean history previous to the fourth century.

\* Nihon Gwaishi. Military History of Japan, by Rai Sanyo. This is the Japanese standard history. It was published in 1827 in twenty-two volumes. It covers the



period from the Taira and Minamoto families to that of the Tokugawa in the seventeenth century... In the latter portion the invasion of Cho-sen, 1592-97, is outlined.

\* Cho-sen Seito Shimatsuki. A work in five volumes, giving an account of the embassies, treaties, documents relating to the invasion of 1592-97, with an outline of the war, geographical notes, with nine maps by Yamasaki Masanagi and Miura Katsuyoshi.

\* Illustrated History of the Invasion of Cho-sen. Written by Tsurumine Hikoichiro. Illustrations by Hashimoto Giokuron. 20 vols. Yedo, 1853. This popular work, besides an outline of Korean history from the beginning, condensed from local legends and Chinese writers, details the operations of war and diplomacy relating to Hideyoshi's invasion...

\*Cho-sen Monogatari. A Diary and Narrative of the Japanese Military Operation in Cho-sen during the Campaign of 1594-97, by Okoji Hidemoto. Copied out and published in 1672, and again in 1849. This narrative of an eye-witness was written by the author at the time of the events described, and afterward copied by his own son and deposited in the ancestors worshipped. This vivid and spirited story of the second invasion of Cho-sen by Hideyoshi has been translated into German...

\* Three Several testimonies Concerning the mighty Kingdom of Coray, tributary to the Kingdom of China, and bordering upon her Northeastern Frontiers, and called by the Portugales, Coria, etc., etc., collected out of Portugale yeerely Japonian Epistles, dated 1590, 1592, 1594. In Hakluyt, London, 1600.

\* Hideyoshi's Invasion of Korea. Trans. Asiatic Society of Japan. By W. G. Aston. In these papers Mr. Aston gives the results of a study of the campaign of 1592-97, as found in Japanese and Korean authors.

Based on the descriptions of the documents above, not only were they Japanese-centric accounts of Korean history but most of them were specifically Hideyoshi-centric historiography. The description of the second resource titled, *Nihon Gwaishi*, informs us that this was the Japanese standard text for history. However, this "Japanese standard history" was "Military History of Japan", also depicting history specifically to the benefit of Japanese military. Apart from the first book that depicts "History of the Eastern

Barbarians”, the rest of the books from the above listing are described to have been Hideyoshi-centric interpretation of the Asiatic history. Griffis’ Hideyoshi-centric selections of historical references explain the misrepresentation of Korea and historical inaccuracies within the book. It seems that the Fukui-Japanese context of his personal experience combined with the Hideyoshi-centric historiographical references have heavily affected much of Griffis’ understanding of Korea, mainly in terms of his perspective on the subject matters relevant to Korea’s history of war.

The Japanese historical practice of changing the past incidents “according to what the ego considers to be the most favorable past” is bound to have created such problems. But when such practice is applied to serve the historiography based on a war veteran like Hideyoshi, the motivation to alter historical facts would have been more encouraged – creating consequent historical discrepancies. In addition to changing historical facts, the Japanese historiography also used historical plagiarisms as part of their techniques to creating a superior past. Hong Jin-hee uses the *Japanese Annals* (일본서기) as one of her examples to dispute the exaggerations, historical inversions, missing information and historical plagiarisms found in the Japanese historiography. She states that not only there are extensive amount of missing pieces by periodic portions but in some cases, the Japanese would borrow a part of Korean history to backdate the event or even fabricate the historical event by replacing the Korean places and historical figures with the Japanese places and figures.<sup>79</sup> Throughout Griffis’ works, including *The*

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<sup>79</sup> 홍진희, 일본은 한국 역사를 왜 비뚤로 가르칠까, 44.  
Jin-hee Hong, *Why Japan Teaches Altered Korean History*, 44.

*Mikado's Empire* and *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, he indicates his awareness of the same document. However, it is hard to assert how much Griffis had relied on the *Japanese Annals for Corea, the Hermit Nation*, since he omits “*the annals of Nihon*”<sup>80</sup> from his bibliography.

Consequently, this explains the contradictions, obscurities and historical inaccuracies we faced in the previous section, regarding the topic of the Korean dog, the first enthroned empress and the naval activities. The contradictory symbolism the Japanese ama-inu serves is evidence of their attempt to either borrow or override (or both) the Korean jindo. However, their failure to keeping with the consistency in approach has resulted in creating a contradictory symbolism of their ama-inu.

Accordingly, the unsuitable date of the Empress Jingu convinces that the figure was an example of Japanese attempt to plagiarize a Korean historical figure. It seems that the historical figure they plagiarized was Empress Seondeuk in the Korean history. Empress Seondeuk was the first empress enthroned in Korea, whose wisdom and good governing has made her into an iconic figure of the Shinra Kingdom. Similarly, the Japanese Empress Jingu was also the first Empress ever to be enthroned in Japan, who

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“뿐만 아니라 백제, 고구려, 신라, 임나의 사신들이 왜에게 공물을 바치는 장면이 수도 없이 나온다. 이런 식으로 “일본서기”에서는 백제나 신라, 고구려 등에 비해 상대적으로 왜가 우월한 위치에 있었다는 형태로 왜의 실력을 강조하고 있다.

그렇다면 이러한 일들은 사실이었을까? 현재 한국은 물론이고 일본의 학자들마저도 이 기록에 대해서 부정적이다 못해, 아예 “일본서기”에서 역사성 자체를 배제하는 형편이다. 그것은 “일본서기”에 등장하는 사건이나 사실에 과장이 심하고, 시기적으로 도치되고 누락된 부분이 많기 때문이다. 어떤 경우에는 한국의 역사를 빌려다가 수십 년 혹은 백 년 이상을 지난 뒤에 일어난 일로 만들어 놓는가 하면, 한국의 지명과 인물 대신에 그들의 지명과 인명을 삽입하여 그들의 역사로 치장하기도 하였다. 때문에 역사적으로 납득이 어려울 만큼 앞뒤가 맞지 않는 황당한 부분이 허다한 것 등 그 사례를 이루 열거하기도 어려울 정도다.”

<sup>80</sup> William E. Griffis, *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, 57. [Nihon is the Japanese word for “Japan”]

accomplished to make the Shinra Kingdom as the vassal of Japan. Empress Jingu is claimed to have been a 3<sup>rd</sup> century figure, as opposed to Empress Seondeuk's rule in the 7<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>81</sup> The purpose of such backdating serves the convenience of making false claims about the longevity of Korea being Japan's vassal country as well as to place Empress Jingu as the very first female enthroned in all of Asia. However, as it was previously established, the discrepancies of dates and overlapping figures have decertified the validity of Empress Jingu as an actual historical figure. Contrary to the historical controversies of Japan's first enthroned empress, the historicity of the Korean Empress Seondeuk coincides with the archeological remains that are still preserved in the North Kyongsang Province of Korea. These relicts have also been registered as part of Korean national treasures, including her grave, the Punhwang-sa Pagoda and her invention, Chomsongdae Observatory.

In the previous section, we have already refuted the misnomer of the Korean shipbuilding technology. During the process of analysis of this particular topic, there were numerous examples of false representation of the Korean naval activities. The context of the Japanese historiographical behaviors combined with the context of the primary sources Griffis referred to being the products of the Hideyoshi-historiography, articulates the excessiveness of the misleading factors specifically pertaining to the subject matters relevant to military activities. In fact, the middle portion of the book, which Griffis dedicates to topics that are irrelevant to war history and political affairs, carries a different tone of presentation – unbiased but simply informative.

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<sup>81</sup> Woo-keun Han, *The History of Korea*. 80.

It is in Part II and a portion of Part III of *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, is where Griffis keeps his objectivity. As he refrains his instigations and opinions throughout these pages he is able to mediate the transportation of the streets of Korea onto the streets of America; the living spaces of Korea into the American living rooms; clothing the Caucasians with the Korean *hanboks* (한복, Korean traditional clothes). According to the preface, it seems that such objectiveness should be dedicated to his French resource:

I have borrowed largely from Dallet's "Histoire d'Englise de Coree," especially in the chapters devoted to Folk-lore, Social Life, and Christianity.<sup>82</sup>

In light of such context of the informants and documents used to inform Griffis about a country he had yet to visit, it is not surprising to find two opposing tone of voice: one being the Japanese tone of presentation and the objective tone drawn out from his French source of document. The objective presentation is predominantly located in the middle portion of the book, in Part II. However, based on the nature of the presentation in Part II, Griffis is easily able to avoid showing partiality.

Unlike Part I, where Griffis gives a narrative historical presentation of Korea, he designed Part II to outsource as much information as he could. This section is a cocktail of all trivial subject matters enveloped under a vague heading, "Political and Social Corea." He fills this chapter with a lot of inserts, such as maps, charts, drawings, pictures, war flags, proverbs, folktales, and legends. Therefore, unlike Part I, the setup of this section demands Griffis to be descriptive than narrative, based on the various inserts. Throughout Part II, these indigenous inserts are the dominating factors of the presentational structure, demanding only seldom references to the Japanese subject

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<sup>82</sup> William E. Griffis, *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, xvi.

matters, as rightfully should have been the case since the beginning due to the nature of this particular book. In the few places that he *does* refer to Japan, even within this section, Griffis continues to call Koreans “semi-civilized”<sup>83</sup> and suggests the inferiority of the Koreans as incomparable to the “magnificence [of] those of Japan or China.”<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless, Part II, by structure, naturally refrains Griffis’ from being as rigorously as opinionated as he was in Part I, turning Part II into the most objective 177pages out of the 472 pages of *Corea, the Hermit Nation*.

He carries this objective approach well in to Part III of the book. He continues to incorporate lots of inserts: more maps, drawings, pictures, stories, etc. The overarching theme of Part III however, addresses the Christian influence of Westernization in Asia, primarily central to its benefits and the flow of movements in Japan. Therefore, this section is an exemplary product of Griffis’ introspective context of the New World American Christian collaborated with the Japanese Traditionalism, which is Griffis’ life-long stance as an orientalist. It was only at the very end of his life that Griffis began to question the Japanese intention toward Korea and grow sympathetic towards the country. By the time he finally visits Korea in 1927, only few months before his death; by then, *Corea, the Hermit Naiton* had been circulating for over four decades in the Occident, popularly used as an encyclopedic resource.

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<sup>83</sup> William E. Griffis, *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, 234.

<sup>84</sup> William E. Griffis, *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, 262.

## CHAPTER 6

### GRIFFIS AS AN ORIENTALIST

In spite of its flaws, many have profitably read and referred to *Corea, the Hermit Nation*. The main reason for its popularity was its timely publication. *Corea, the Hermit Nation* was published in the same year that Korea had officially stepped out from their centuries of isolation policy. The only informative access to Korea in 1882 was through this book. Griffis' vibrant descriptions about the landscape (including how it smells and feels), its people, animals, the customs, architectures, daily life-style, food, sayings, expressions, folktales, appearances, and other trivial subjects contributed to bringing Korea into the American homes. Through Griffis' introduction, Korea became an intriguing new world to know about for the general audience. Griffis had well-advertised the book all throughout the remainder of his life, through other forms of writings and through many lectures.

This chapter therefore will serve to identify Griffis' communicative attributes as an orientalist which has kept his book in its place as reference over 130 years, making it an influential piece. I will introduce Griffis as a skilled communicator by analyzing Griffis as an orientalist. In his career as an orientalist, he used every channel possible to keep in active communication with his audience. As a prolific writer, one of his routes of communication was through his authorship. As fitting to his teaching and preaching experiences, lectures and articles were also some of his major channels of communication. Therefore, I will present the consistency of his Christian-Westernization of the Japanese-Asiatic East, which convinced the validity of *Corea, the Hermit Nation*. Our

understanding of Griffis' impact as an orientalist, will allow us to see the reason for its lasting use despite the misrepresentations.

### ***William E. Griffis as an Orientalist – As an Author***

Griffis' interactive trait was evident in many ways. As an author, Griffis was in consistent dialogue with his readers. He was willing to add on missing information, make corrections and even provide clarification in response to his critics of the previous editions; which explains his numerous editions per book. For instance, he published eight editions of *The Mikado Empire* and six editions of *Corea, the Hermit Nation*. During this process, if he felt the need to provide extensive updates due to the prolonged gap that had occurred since the publication of his first edition, he would often bravely add on new chapters instead of publishing a separate book or inserting into the appendix. After publishing the first edition of *Corea, the Hermit Nation* in 1882, he published the second edition in 1885. Disregarding the needlessness of an additional preface, he adds the polity of explaining why there is no addition to this edition and also explains the reason behind publishing this edition:

The publishers have informed the author of their intention to issue an edition of the present work in a cheaper form... thorough research has as yet hardly begun... we have not, therefore, made any addition to our text.<sup>85</sup>

He does however cease the opportunity to insert his recent firsthand encounters of some of the Korean leaders with updates on Korea's international relations since 1882 to 1885 and brings the book to current standing:

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<sup>85</sup> William E. Griffis, *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1902), x.



Since its issue, in October, 1882, several events of interest have occurred, of which we here take note... After spending some weeks in the study of American institutions in several cities, part of the embassy returned home by way of San Francisco, leaving one of their number at Salem, Mass., to remain as a student; while Min Yong Ik and two secretaries embarked on the U.S. Steamship Trenton, and after visiting Europe, reached Seoul in June, 1884. The author spent a most profitable and pleasant evening, November 27<sup>th</sup>, with the three Koreans before they left New York. Many questions concerning their country were discussed.<sup>86</sup>

The sense of Griffis' interactivity with his audience is more apparent in the preface of the third edition of 1888:

From those best able to criticize it thoroughly, by having made themselves familiar by travel in the interior of Corea beyond the ports and capital, have come gratifying words of high appreciation. Of course errors have been pointed out, and these, wherever proved, have been corrected in the present edition. The publishers have also generously permitted the introduction of new matter, in the form of foot-notes, and the addition of a supplementary chapter... the author returns hearty thanks to [Griffis lists individual names]... and the other naval officers, natives, travellers, missionaries, and residents in Corea who have aided him with their criticisms, or information. He will be grateful if others will point out inaccuracies.<sup>87</sup>

In the preface to the third edition, he corresponds to his critics by correcting mistakes found in the previous edition and by adding twelve pages of an extra chapter titled, "Corea in 1888". By the time he publishes the sixth edition in 1897, he informs his readers as a cautionary remark to his own book that Korea has changed significantly enough since the first publication of the book and even since the last addition of the supplemental chapter in 1888:

Old Corea is passing away so fast, and the once hermit nation is now so active in the world's market-place, that the first edition of this volume steadily gains new interest and value as a record of things no longer existing. In notes and the supplementary chapters, "Corea in 1888" and "Corea in 1897," I have endeavored

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., xi.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., vix.

to outline recent history and show the new order of things and striking events to date. The author frankly acknowledges that in Part II., "Political and Social Corea," there are descriptions of things and customs which are now obsolete, and that these chapters do not represent the views of an eye-witness on the soil in 1897...<sup>88</sup>

Similarly, there are portions also within *The Mikado's Empire* indicating that Griffis kept well in touch with his readers. In fact, there are more supplementary chapters in *The Mikado's Empire* than in *Corea, the Hermit Nation* and even greater sense of communication. There are five total supplementary chapters in *The Mikado's Empire*: "Japan in 1883", "Japan in 1886", "Japan in 1890", "Japan in 1894" and "The War with China" with more blatant expository interaction between Griffis and his readers found in one of the prefaces. In the preface to the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of *The Mikado's Empire*, Griffis' response to his critics is so blunt and personal that it almost seems like he is responding to a fan letter rather than writing a preface. He writes:

Critics have complained that in Book I. the line between the mythical, or legendary, and the historic period has not been clearly drawn... Did the critic read Chapter III.? The author, before essaying the task, knew only too well the difficulties of the work before him... In one point the author has been misapprehended... Another reason that explains many omissions, notably, that of any detailed reference to Japanese art, is, that this volume is not an encyclopedia... The author returns his hearty thanks to his Japanese friends, and to the critics whose scrutiny has enabled him in any way to improve the work.<sup>89</sup>

Notice Griffis' apparent sarcasm, "Did the critic read Chapter III?" which is hard to find in the preface of a professional piece. Griffis, however, seemed to have been more outspoken than ordinary, which serves to lead him beyond in his career as an author.

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., vii.

<sup>89</sup> William E. Griffis, *The Mikado's Empire*, 13-15.

### ***William E. Griffis as an Orientalist – As a Public Figure***

Soon after his return from Japan in 1874, Griffis worked hard to introduce Asia to the West. His means of introducing Asia to the Americans was through various lectures, articles he wrote or often times, even through the articles written about his lectures. There are newspaper articles showing evidence of Griffis having been an active lecturer even while he was in active ministry. It shows that he went from church to church, introducing Asia to the American Christians to bring awareness of the Christian and developmental need of the Orient. Article titled, “Japanese Victory Spells Progress – Masses of Russia Would Gain As Much as Asiatic Peasants – Lecture by Dr. W. E. Griffis”, dated February 16 (Tuesday) of an unknown year:

“The Rev. William Elliot Griffis of this city asserted before an audience which filled the First Baptist church last evening... Dr. Griffis, having lived in Japan for...”

“Walpole, Feb. 19. – Rev. Dr. W. E. Griffis, formerly pastor of the Shawsheen Congregational church in Boston, and the first man called from a foreign country under the charter-oath” of the Mikado of Japan in 1868 to assist in “relaying the foundations of the empire,” lectured here on the Russo-Japanese war tonight. He is showing what the men of Japan are fighting for – national existence. Dr. Griffis spoke in Albany on Thursday evening before the Delta Upsilon banquet at the Ten Eyck. He spoke here in the Congregational church. His views, as stated, were as follows...”<sup>90</sup>

In a newspaper article he wrote, titled, “*Yellow Peril Not Our Nightmare,*” Says Dr. Griffis, he writes in effort to diminish the walls of difference between the “Oriental and the Occidental man” and tries to convince unity:

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<sup>90</sup> GCRUL.

“The greatest problem of this century is the union and reconciliation of the Oriental and the Occidental man.”<sup>91</sup>

As an Orientalist, Griffis encouraged Americans to become Christian agents for Asia by spreading his hopeful vision for Japan to lead the rest of Asia to Christ. He often confronted the un-Christianity of the Western nations, by which he fanned the Christian flames of the Americans, reviving the Christian identity as Americans.

“We of the Occident call ourselves “Christian” nations, yet the treatment of Japan in politics, diplomacy, often brutally, unchristian. What shall we say of Great Britain’s coercion of Japan on the tariff question? Of Russia’s attempted seizure of Tsushima and of her taking Saghalien?...

Surely by her actions Japanese has shown herself as much a “Christian” nation as many who boast the name in Europe.”<sup>92</sup>

Article found in the October 15, 1904 publication of *The Christian Word and Evangelist*, Griffis’s article titled, “Christian Interest in the Far Eastern War” justifies America’s Westernization:

“In her career of six score years, since first in 1784 the Stars and Stripes were carried round the world, there has been one unbroken American policy. It has been that of honorable trade, besides a purpose to teach, heal, help, and uplift the Asiatic nations. On the contrary, the European policy has been that of conquest, Russia leading in the unchristian work of rapine and in trampling the life out of these people.”<sup>93</sup>

Griffis justifies America’s Westernization over and against the European attempts. In his perspective, the American intention was for the benevolent cause of benefitting another, as opposed to the European intention to benefit their own. Not only that, he believed and taught that America was the chosen nation, where Christ will establish his renewed

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<sup>91</sup> GCRUL

<sup>92</sup> GCRUL

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

Kingdom, hence the name, New World. Griffis continuously justifies Westernization by correlating it to accomplishing religious cause:

“The American way is not conquest or land theft, it is by uplift and enlightenment. The march of the United States on the East, in China, Japan, Korea, is the work left by the missionary, physician, teacher, engineer, man of science, and of diplomacy that has conscience and is Christian... The “yellow peril” is the nightmare of political-church Europe, not of the United States, of free inquiry, public schools and the rights of the people.”<sup>94</sup>

This was the common context of belief during that time. Therefore, he believed that when America modernized, it Christianized and meant expansion of Christ’s Kingdom. In that sense, American Westernization was helpful in a lot of ways for the Asian countries. Contrary to the motives of the Americans, He accuses the European motives to have been purely to benefit their own countries and not contributing to Christ’s Kingdom nor to the opponent countries. Under this belief context, he expressed his support for the victory of the Japanese, later during the Russo-Japanese conflicts.

“American sympathies are with the islanders against the continentals; first, because we feel that the Japanese are virtually fighting our battle, that they represent, far more than does Russia, the general idea embodied in the constitution of the United States, and in their mental attitude the twentieth rather than the sixteenth century. Last, not least, and perhaps first, in the minds of praying Christians – and who is not praying for Japan now? Is the hope, the desire, that God will overrule, that the plowshare of war will rip up the matted black earth of a paganism and open the soil of eastern Asia to the Gospel...

What he meant by “we feel that the Japanese are virtually fight our battle” is that the Americans viewed the Russo-Japanese War as a spiritual battle. Since Christian America had been Westernizing (another words, Christianizing) Japan, the Japanese victory meant that the Kingdom of God would have also experienced the victory, expanding the

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

Kingdom of God. This kind of mentality is in line with the context of Griffis' that we previously analyzed through Chapter 5.

Based on the relationship between America and Japan, Griffis believed that Japan signified modernity and Christianity. He believed that Japan's motive for the Russo-Japanese war was as Christian as it was for the Americans. Therefore he often lectured according to his hope of Japan bringing the gospel to Korea and China and to other countries.

First, and above all, the Asian nations need "truth in the inward parts." Truth heals, uplifts, makes great. Lying, concealment, "saving the face" is a fine art in Asia...

Japan's salvation, so far as wrought to date, has sprung directly out of the practice of truth

"... and may Christian Japan lead a Christian Asia."

Similar to America, Griffis believed that Japan's means of bringing the gospel was also going to be through Westernization:

"Japan stands for schools, religious liberty, fair policy to China and Korea, and the right of the Altaic nations to live... Japan's ambition is not martial, it is commercial."

Notice from the examples throughout the articles and lectures that Griffis was consistently linking modernization with Christianization. As this belief continued to be prevalent in America, *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, which also carries coinciding view regarding Westernization, became a piece that was widely sought out.

## CONCLUSION

We have seen the changes in Griffis' presentational approach, depending on the sources he is drawing from. He is unable to keep a consistent literary tone throughout the book. The book is divided into three different parts – Part I, Part II and Part III – consisting three distinctive presentational tones respectively to the three Parts. Part I is distinctively written in Japanese historiographical tone; Part II merely compiles trivial subjects and is relatively unbiased in its tone than Part I; Part III has a sympathetic – the Benevolent American tone. Such variances exist because of his lack of first-hand encounter of Korea. As he relied heavily on the resources, he was unable to develop his own objective discernment regarding Korea but only transcribe what he heard from others – primarily Japanese.

“Compilation” is the best way to describe *Corea, the Hermit Nation*. Not only it's a compilation of various information, but it is also a compilation of Griffis' personal contexts: His favorable context of heart toward the Japanese is thoroughly expressed; his informative character as a collector and teacher is also displayed through the informative middle portion of the book; his observant attribute as a minister, in hopeful concerns for the civilized Christianization of Korea is what allows his later portion to act as a window into his era.

Therefore, based on the way different sources have influenced Griffis' presentation, *Corea, the Hermit Nation* is not an entirely objective encyclopedic source but a good compilation of exhaustive sources. In terms of the informative factors, *Corea, the Hermit Nation* is an excellent source of information pertaining to the Korean geography, life-

style and culture. However, it is not a reliable document for historical accuracies, especially pertaining to earlier portion of the Korean history and cannot fit into the objective spectrum of the 21<sup>st</sup> century academic historiography.



**APPENDIX**  
**ARCHAEOLOGY**

**Empress Seondeuk's Grave (선덕여왕릉):**

Historic Site No. 182

Location: 79-2-san, Bomoon-dong,

Kyungju, Northern Kyongsang Province.

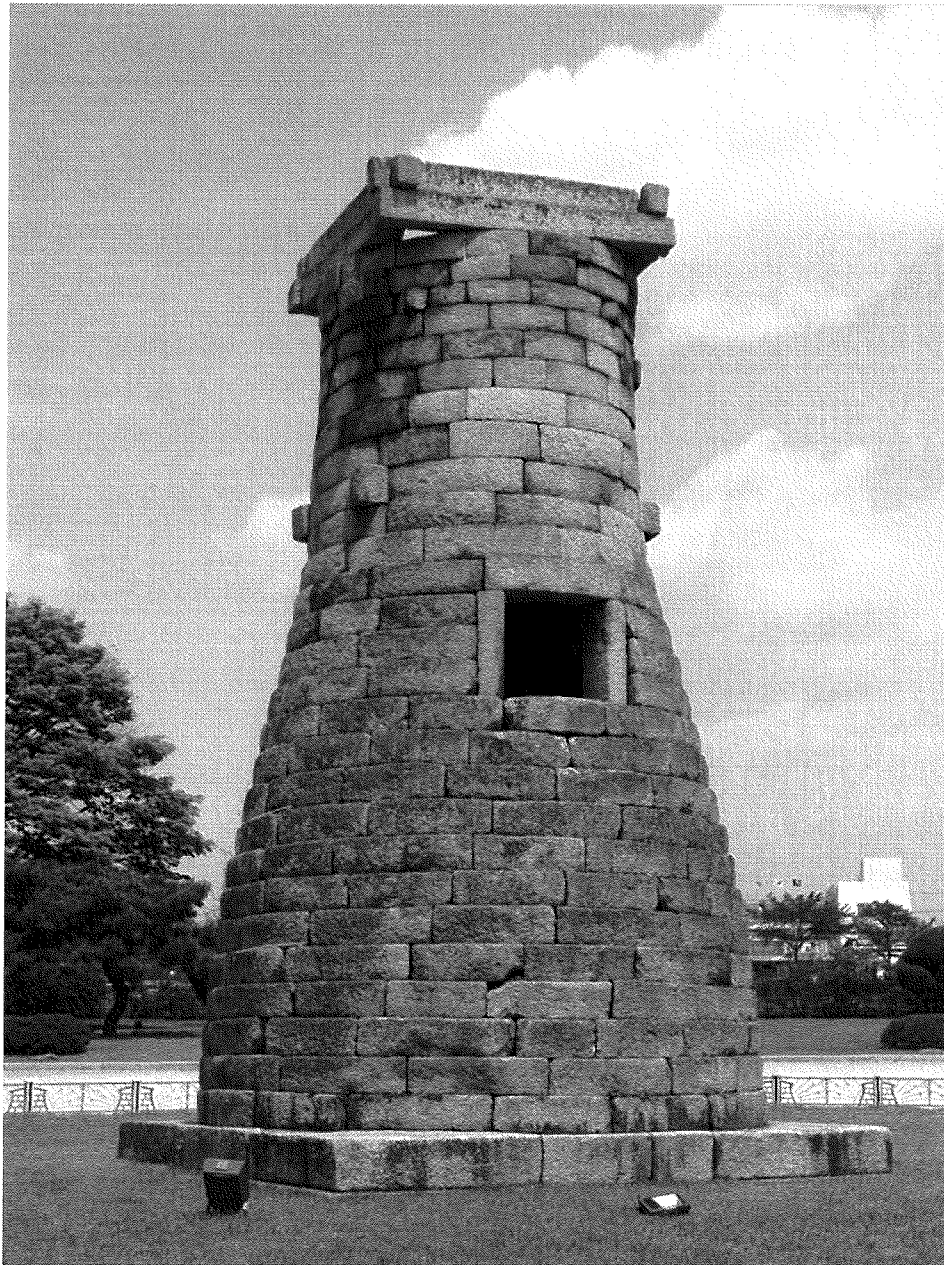


**Ch'omsongdae (첨성대):**

Type: Granite; H. 9.29m.

Description: Stone observatory invented by Empress Seondeuk of Old Shinra dynasty, 7<sup>th</sup> century.

Location: Inwang-dong Kyongju, North Kyongsang Province.

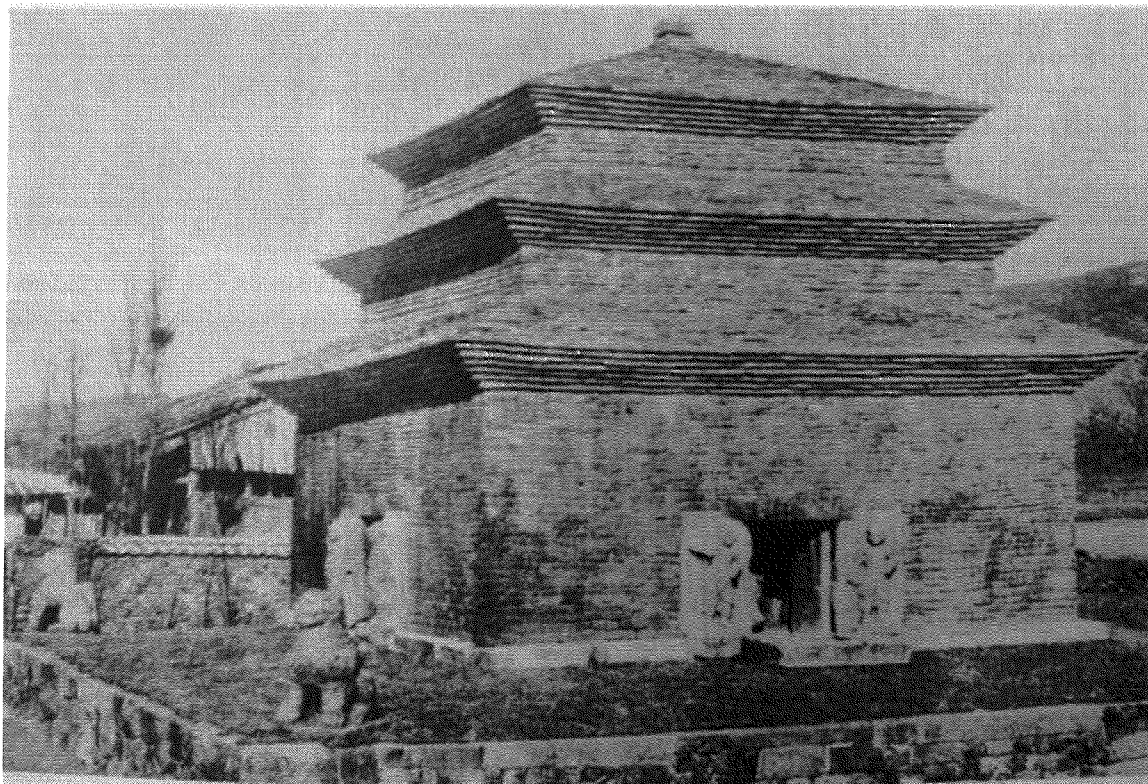


**Punhwang-sa (분황사):**

Type: Granite; H. 8.4m.

Description: Stone pagoda erected by Empress Seondeuk of Old Shinra dynasty, 7<sup>th</sup> century.

Location: Kyongju



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The William Elliot Griffis Collection, housed in the Rutgers University Library, contains an ample amount of materials pertaining to Dr. Griffis' works, from personal diaries, correspondences, notes, newspaper clippings, and etc. His Korean materials in particular includes books and articles on the removal of Queen Min, the Korean Independence movement, numerous resources in Korea under Japanese rule and many photographs and articles from the late Yi period. This collection is referred to as GCRUL throughout the thesis.

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